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Community Indicators: Development, Monitoring and Reporting

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Abstract

The New Zealand Government is striving to improve the way it measures progress and plans for change in an integrated 'whole of government' manner. The Local Government Act 2002 serves to strengthen participatory democracy and community governance. Under the Act, local authorities are charged with monitoring, and, not less than once every three years, reporting on the progress made by the community in achieving its outcomes for the district or region. These outcomes belong to the community and encompass what the community considers important to progress towards.

Indicators that measure economic, social, environmental, cultural and democratic progress at local level are a primary tool that local authorities use to measure the progress towards their desired outcomes. To successfully track progress, it is important that indicators are technically sound and reflect the values of the entire community. The monitoring of indicators is expected to be ongoing and participatory.

The New Zealand Government has leant heavily towards a decentralised locally driven approach to community indicators. The purpose of this study was to explore the manner in which different local authorities have undertaken community indicator: development, monitoring and reporting. This was undertaken through a two pronged approach:

- A scoping exercise assessing the contents of eighteen local authority LTCCPs.
- In-depth case studies of community indicator programmes of five of the eighteen local authorities.

It was found that the approaches used to develop, monitor and report community indicators ranged abruptly across local authorities. Some councils appear to have relatively robust and meaningful indicator processes in place, which are both technically sound and have gained representative community input. In contrast, other councils hold a compliance mentality towards community indicators and have done the bare minimum when designing their indicator frameworks. These frameworks have tended to be council dominated with few opportunities for community involvement. In addition to this, local authorities poorly communicated indicators through their LTCCPs. The inadequate information detailing indicators processes is unlikely to both educate and promote community buy-in.

Councils must place greater emphasis on the engagement of the entire community including other governmental departments, to ensure that indicators are relevant and meaningful for all. Consistency across local authority indicator frameworks will also help to ensure that all local authorities are working in an integrated manner towards the common goal of improving community well-being. Initiatives such as the Linked indicators Project and the Quality of Life Project are possible methods of ensuring consistent indicator frameworks. Finally, councils must provide greater information about community indicators within their LTCCPs.

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1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Scope of the Study

Worldwide trends in the form of globalization and postmodernism have had a dramatic impact on the societies of most developed countries (Hubbard et al 2002). In New Zealand these trends have crafted a society of greater diversity. Local government is arguably the level of democracy closest to the community (Johnston & Memon 2007), and has a significant influence on local and regional communities (Breuer & Kettle 2008). Traditionally governments use a top-down, expert dominated approach to decision making (Lawrence 2000, Thompson 2000). However, this approach is widely criticized due to the tendency of its decisions to become captured by vested interests, most commonly the interests of society's elite (Lawrence 2000). Not surprisingly, with more diversity in society, a growing dissatisfaction in many sectors of society with government decision making processes has emerged (Salvaris 2000).

The Local Government Act 2002 henceforth the LGA, is a possible solution to the weaknesses that plague traditional government processes. The purpose of the LGA is to broaden the scope of government through enabling democratic, local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of communities; and to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and the future (Leonard & Memon 2008). This entails a shift from government to governance. This shift should encourage participatory democracy, so that ultimately, decisions made reflect the diversity of the community. The success of the LGA is therefore dependent to a large extent on robust community engagement by local authorities (Johnston & Memon 2007, Leonard & Memon 2008).

Figure 1. The strategic planning framework (Reid 2005)

(Figure 1 Removed for Copyright Purposes)

Under the Act, local authorities are charged with facilitating the development and monitoring of community outcomes, which belong to the community (Reid 2005). These outcomes encompass what the community considers important to make progress towards. Figure 1 above illustrates the strategic planning framework for community outcomes. The outcomes identified by the community must be reviewed every six years, while the progress towards outcomes reported every three years. The outcomes from this process in turn form the basis on which local authorities will develop their Long Term Council Community Plans, henceforth the LTCCP. An LTCCP sets out the strategic priorities of a local authority for ten years ahead. It articulates a strategy, to deliver clear goals that have been agreed between the council and the community (Lorraine & Memon 2008). LTCCPs must be formally updated every three years. An LTCCP, which must be inclusive of community outcomes, will then feed into a council's annual plan which is reported back to the community. The key provisions of the LGA relevant to community outcomes are: sections 91, 92, 93 and Schedule 10. The LGA provisions are included in appendix one.

Central to the success of community outcomes is the development of meaningful indicators to measure outcome progress (Johnston & Memon 2007). Identifying appropriate indicators of economic, social, environmental, cultural and democratic progress, is a challenging task that will require considerable

effort on behalf of the local authority (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006), as well as social-scientific and technical expertise (Johnston & Memon 2007). However, if indicators are to truly reflect the values of all sectors of the community, local authorities must secure the input of a cross-section of the community during indicator development processes (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Burke 2004, Hoernig & Seasons 2004). This is best achieved through a participatory approach to indicator development. Under the LGA, local authorities must measure the progress of their community outcomes through monitoring selected indicators, and then report progress back to the community. Although the LGA gives councils very little guidance to how they should go about developing, monitoring and reporting indicators, it is expected that councils undertake the process in a participatory and ongoing manner (Johnston & Memon 2007).

The first round of mandatory three yearly community outcomes progress reports is due shortly. The purpose of this research is to explore the manner in which different local authorities are undertaking the function of community indicator development, monitoring and reporting for community outcomes. This will be examined both broadly and in-depth. The research will also explore the related issues of co-ordination and integration between LGA and Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) indicator monitoring and reporting regimes, and the extent of co-ordination and integration of community indicator frameworks across government authorities.

1.2 Research Questions and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to address the following three key research questions:

1. What are the ways in which different local authorities have undertaken the functions of selecting indicators and developing LTCCP monitoring and reporting regimes within the LGA framework?
2. What is the quality of LGA monitoring and reporting frameworks developed and implemented by local authorities?
3. How well co-ordinated and integrated are local authority community indicator frameworks with RMA indicator frameworks and across local authority boundaries?

A two pronged approach will be adopted to address the above three research questions:

- a. a scoping exercise of the contents of the LTCCPs from a range of New Zealand district and regional councils, and
- b. an in-depth case study of four councils: the Otago Regional Council, the Christchurch City Council, the Dunedin City Council and the Waitaki District Council.

The scoping of local authority's LTCCPs

When preparing LTCCPs councils are required by the Act to state what measures will be used to assess progress and how the council intends to report this progress to the community. Additionally, the LTCCP should include information about the council's expenditure on programs undertaken to achieve outcomes.

The following scoping exercise assesses the contents of the LTCCPs of eighteen local authorities across New Zealand. The eighteen local authorities were selected because they represent a range of council sizes in respect to both their jurisdictional boundaries and the amount of resourcing available for their disposal. The local authorities selected also represent a range of council types. Six regional councils and twelve territorial local authorities are studied. It is assumed that the findings from the scoping exercise will in general represent the community indicator frameworks of all New Zealand local authorities.

The purpose of the scoping exercise is to assess to what extent and how local authorities have gone about communicating with the general public about community outcomes and indicators through the LTCCP, and to gain an insight into the approach local authorities have used to meet LGA requirements. The scoping exercise is linked to questions one and two of the research's three key questions. The scoping exercise is predominately focused around the idea of desirable attributes of indicator frameworks.

Informed by an International and New Zealand literature review on community indicators, the scoping exercise will examine the following questions:

- 1) Are indicators included in the LTCCPs, and if so, are the indicator sets complete or incomplete?

- 2) Are targets set for the indicators? (Targets help define success or the achievement of an outcome).
- 3) Does the LTCCP explain the process used to develop and monitor the indicators? (Educating the community about community indicator processes will promote community buy-in).
- 4) Does the LTCCP mention the extent of community involvement during indicator development? (Community involvement is necessary if indicators are to reflect the community's diversity).
- 5) Does the LTCCP state the local authority's intended actions to help further the community outcomes? (Success of community outcomes will depend on all parties including the council progressing towards outcomes in an integrated manner).
- 6) Does the LTCCP identify how and when reporting back to the community will occur? (Reporting acts to stimulate action by the community and should ideally be performed regularly).
- 7) Do the indicators within LTCCPs include qualitative indicators? (Qualitative indicators are better suited to telling the 'community's story' compared to quantitative indicators).

In-depth case studies of local authority community indicator practices.

The in-depth case studies involved contacting four local authorities within the South Island. The local authorities were: the Waitaki District Council, the Dunedin City Council, the Christchurch City Council and the Otago Regional Council. Similar to the scoping exercise the local authorities selected were designed to represent a cross-section of council sizes and types. Due to time and budget constraints only four councils were selected for study in-depth. Despite this shortfall it is felt that the findings are likely to reflect common community indicator practices of New Zealand local authorities. The intention of the in-depth case studies was to work with these councils to gather information concerning their processes for indicator: development, monitoring and reporting. Information was collected by conducting qualitative, semi-formal interviews, with a council official responsible for community indicators. The interviews focused on the following components:

- Indicator Development
- Indicator Monitoring

- Indicator Reporting
- Co-ordination and Integration
- Community Governance

The questionnaire is included in the appendix.

The above components are designed to answer all three key research questions.

In addition to the interviews, the two 'Community Outcome Progress Workshops' of the Christchurch City Council held late last year were attended to gain an insight into their monitoring processes.

1.3 Significant Reports Exploring LGA Community Outcomes and Indicators

There is a growing body of research that has been carried out on LGA processes for community outcomes and indicators. Four recent research reports provide useful commentaries and insights into community indicator development, monitoring and reporting. This study contributes to this knowledge base.

Research undertaken for the Planning Under Cooperative Mandates (PUCM) programme.

PUCM is an on-going programme of research exploring the quality of planning and governance in New Zealand local government. Since the programmes inception in 1995, four phases of research have evolved. Phases one to three have focused on planning and governance under the RMA, while the latest of these phases (phase four) concentrates on planning and governance under the LGA. So far two reports of relevance to this research have been completed.

- *Community Outcome Processes as a Forum for Community Governance* (Leonard & Memon 2007, PUCM Report 3).
- *Choosing Community-based Indicators to Monitor and Report Progress Towards Community Outcomes* (Johnston & Memon 2007, PUCM Report 4).

Research undertaken by Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ)

LGNZ is an organisation that represents the national interests of the councils of New Zealand. The organisation promotes best practice in the local government sector by providing policy, advice and training to councils.

- *Engaging with Communities over Outcomes: A review of innovative approaches to meeting the LGA challenge of meeting community outcomes* (Burke 2004).

Research undertaken by Anew NZ

Anew is an independent, non-partisan network of motivated and concerned New Zealanders that seek to create greater levels of national well-being and sustainability through public and community engagement for a sustainable future. Anew advocates for greater public awareness and holistic change by attempting to inspire the public and civil society and by working with business and government sectors.

- *Advancing Community Outcomes and Indicators: Seeking an integrated structure of indicators and illustrations of best practice in processes for community outcomes and LTCCP's* (Breuer & Kettle 2008)

1.4 Significance of the Study

Thus far research examining community indicators has primarily focused on the selection and development of indicators. Very little is known about the indicator monitoring and reporting practices of local authorities. This study is designed so that it continues to build on current knowledge of community indicator selection and development. But unlike other research it will diverge further and examine community indicator monitoring and reporting.

Local authorities have almost complete freedom towards how they approach community indicator: development, monitoring and reporting. As such, it is likely that each local authority will develop their community indicator frameworks in their own unique manner. This report examines the different approaches used by a selection of councils to develop, monitor and report community indicators. It then assesses these approaches against criteria for robust and meaningful community indicator frameworks.

The conclusions drawn from the study's findings will give a picture of how effectively councils have responded to their community indicator responsibilities, through providing the reader an insight into where councils are doing well and not so well with respect to their community indicator and outcome requirements. It is hoped that the research's findings will influence future community indicator processes, and ultimately, help to promote the enhanced well-being of all New Zealanders.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The report is organised in the following way.

In chapter two, international and New Zealand based literature on community indicators are reviewed. Chapter three examines the contents of eighteen local authority LTCCPs through a scoping exercise. While chapter four examines the community indicator practices of four local authorities through in-depth case studies. The empirical findings from the previous two chapters are revisited in chapter five, with the intent of using these findings to answer the researches three key questions. Finally, chapter six draws conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the previous chapters.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Recently, there has been a great deal of interest in investigating institutional arrangements underpinning various aspects of our lives (Johnston & Memon 2008). In New Zealand this interest has sparked the development of a continually widening body of knowledge that evaluates the quality of planning under two key acts, the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA). Together these acts effectively require quadruple bottom line monitoring and reporting (Feeney & Greenaway 2007). The RMA is primarily responsible for environmental well-being, while the LGA primarily covers the social, cultural and economic aspects. Together these Acts effectively cover all the well-being of New Zealanders.

This literature review from a local government perspective scopes international and New Zealand literature that relates to the development, monitoring and reporting of community indicators. This includes co-ordination and integration between either government authorities or RMA and LGA indicator frameworks. The review is based on multiple sources: practitioner manuals, academic research, government agency reports and some grey literature such as council websites and other unpublished research. The literature review was extensive and attempts to cover the key aspects relating to community indicators. The following review will:

- Clarify the concepts and definitions of community indicators.
- Identify the attributes for robust and relevant indicators.
- Summarise indicator processes.
- Outline the opportunities for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to community indicator frameworks.

2.2 What are Indicators?

An indicator is a parameter that can be measured, such as the distance from a goal or a threshold, to show trends in a particular situation (Johnston & Memon 2007, Quality Planning 2008, Statistics New Zealand 2002). Indicators are used to present both quantitative and qualitative information in a formalized and simplified manner (Hodge 1996). Indicators allow the number of measurements that are normally required to give a complete picture of a situation to be reduced. They are tools used to summarize complex data into readily usable information, and to 'flag' an area of concern that requires particular attention (Statistics New Zealand 2002). Indicators are reactive to changing conditions. When indicators are monitored over time they show trends that give an insight towards whether something is progressing, remaining static, or declining (Statistics New Zealand 2002).

2.3 What are Community Indicators?

Community indicators are a term that refers to indicators that are developed at the local and regional scale through a process that has included input from the community (VCIP 2008). Community indicators are statistical tools for translating broad community goals into clear tangible and commonly understood

outcomes and for assessing and communicating progress in achieving these outcomes (VCIP 2008). Community indicators play a vital role in mobilizing citizens to participate in and influence the decision making of government (Hoernig & Seasons 2004). This is achieved through integrated community planning that sets priorities and goals for the future. Community indicators are also unique in that they are socially constructed (Innes de Neufville 1976). As such, the meaning of a community indicator is open to interpretation. Subsequently, for community indicators to be considered valid within the community, indicators must be discussed and debated over by many individuals (Johnston & Memon 2007).

2.4 The Purposes of Indicators

Community indicators are valuable for improving community well-being because of their capability as democratic, policy and reporting tools.

A democratic tool

- Community indicators provide a focus point to engage with local citizens, and to empower communities in discussions about what matters to them. The process of developing and monitoring indicators provides a valuable opportunity for local authorities to inform and involve local citizens and communities. It enables the people engaged to identify key issues, discuss priorities, and plan for the future direction of the community.

A policy tool

- Community indicators help ensure that the decisions local authorities make about policies and budgets are based on the best local evidence. This includes evidence on community priorities, as well as the key: social, economic, environmental, cultural and governance trends in their community. The information that these indicators yield can be used to justify the continuation of existing policy, or the development of new policies to improve community well-being.

A reporting tool

- Community indicators give local authorities the basis for better informed and more comprehensive reporting. It will allow local authorities to effectively track progress in their community, and communicate this progress against agreed goals and outcomes.

(VCIP 2008)

Another important, but often overlooked function of indicators, is that indicators raise public awareness and understanding about sustainability issues through cognitive and social learning processes (Johnston & Memon 2007). This is because increasing environmental awareness from the public correlates to more environmentally considerate behaviour. This function again highlights the importance of engaging with the entire community to capture social diversity.

2.5 Indicator Selection

One of the first issues local authorities encounter before they can begin developing monitoring and reporting frameworks for community outcomes is selecting appropriate and robust indicators (Hoernig & Seasons 2004). There are a wide variety of methods that local authorities can use to select indicators. The 'pressure-state-response' and the 'anticipated environmental response' are two of the most commonly used methods (MfE 2002).

The pressure-state-response method is based on the premises that for each issue (or community outcome) measures of pressure, state, and response should be identified to obtain a balanced picture of what is happening (MfE 2002). With this method indicators are separated into three different types:

- Indicators that measure the pressure on an outcome.
- Indicators that measure the status of an outcome.
- Indicators that measure the response. For instance, a response might be: the development of policies that influence human behaviour.

An alternative method of selecting indicators is through the anticipated environmental response method. By identifying the anticipated environmental response, indicators can then be selected that relate to the desired result or outcome that the council and the community is attempting to achieve (MfE 2002). In other words, monitoring should measure the progress of the community towards their outcomes.

Although the method for selecting indicators is at the discretion of each local authority, it is proposed that the selected indicators should abide with the following criteria:

- **Policy Relevant** – they should enable the measurement of progress towards achieving the outcomes or the desired results.
- **Analytically Valid** – they must be measurable, representative of what is being assessed, have robust collection procedures, be repeated time after time and be responsive to detecting changes.
- **Cost-effective** – the number of indicators should be limited, existing information should be used where possible, and indicators should be inexpensive to implement. Indicators that are useful for monitoring more than one issue will be the most cost-effective.
- **Simple and easy to understand** – they should be easy to interpret and simple to report to the target audience.

(MfE 2002)

2.6 Community Engagement

For indicators to be truly participatory and representative of the community they serve, indicators must be developed by a range of groups and individuals that reflect the community's diversity (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Breuer & Kettle 2008). This will likely mean that the local authority facilitating indicator development must devote considerable effort into securing high levels of awareness and response from the public (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006).

There are numerous techniques that can be employed to raise public indicator awareness. Common approaches include: displays, newspaper articles, leaflets and radio announcements. Similarly, there are a number of techniques to secure public input, such as: focus groups, surveys and workshops. The methods used must be appropriate and have 'community fit', to encourage all individuals that are willing to become involved. A successful approach may require the use of a variety of techniques, as some sections of the community are likely to respond more positively to one technique than another (Beanland & Huser 2007, Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Burke 2004). For example, public meetings have been criticised due to their tendency to only allow the loudest voices to be heard, and are not necessarily representative (Burke 2004). Alternative methods of acquiring public input may be required to appeal to minority populations and to individuals with less developed language skills (Burke 2004).

Input from a cross-section of the community will ultimately lead to a richer and more robust indicator suite (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Burke 2004, Johnston & Memon 2007).

Just as input from the 'grass roots' is important, the input from experts is also highly valuable (Johnston & Memon 2007). Experts provide guidance during indicator development, strengthen the connections between indicators and improve indicator practicality (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006). As such, it is desirable to blend community input with the input of the expert (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006).

2.7 Technical Attributes of Indicators

The caliber of community indicators varies greatly (Blair & Murphy- Greene 2006). Fitting indicators with technical attributes in the form of targets, goals and objectives enhances the analytical and informative power of indicators (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006). Indicators that are given specific targets allows progress to be judged, and helps to create a sense of commitment and accountability for local authorities and the community towards their desired outcomes (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006). Consequently, targets are best developed collaboratively. Indicators should also include the support of base-line data, which acts as a benchmark for which future indicator progress can be assessed (Johnston & Memon 2007).

2.8 Indicator Monitoring

Indicator monitoring is defined as the process of "making systematic observation and measurements to identify trends and patterns" (Sheltair Group 2007 pg 9). The process begins with the establishment of a base-line. Observations and measurements are then plotted against the base-line to track changes (Hoernig & Seasons 2005, Nelson & Serafin 1994). Monitoring of indicators is important because it shows whether the condition of something is changing over time when it is plotted against a base-line value. The monitoring of indicators must be appropriate and ongoing (Sheltair Group 2007). The consequence of not monitoring correctly could result in council's failing to detect significant changes that require immediate intervention (MfE 2002). An optimal monitoring program responds quickly to change. Robust monitoring programs that produce rich datasets provide greater opportunities for informed long-term strategic planning (Sheltair Group 2007).

It is worth noting that monitoring is a high level mechanism for tracking change. Further information gathering and policy analysis may be required to provide a complete picture of why a trend is occurring (MfE 2002).

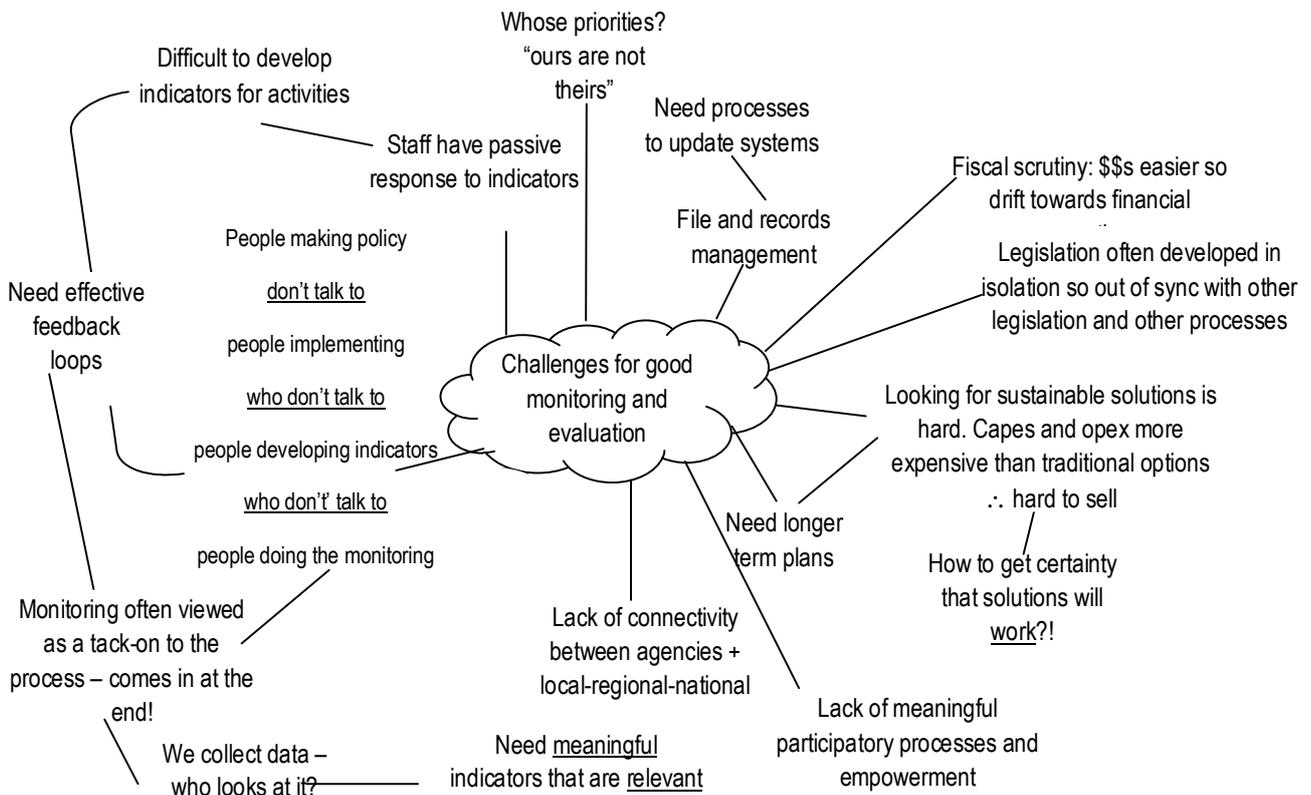


Figure 2. The challenges to good monitoring and evaluation (Wellington Workshop 2007).

Figure 2 above illustrates the main challenges to monitoring and evaluation outlined by participants at a monitoring workshop (Wellington Workshop 2007). The participants came from a variety of organisations including the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Statistics, Ministry of Social Development, Landcare Research and local government. It is important that local authorities monitoring indicators are aware of these challenges.

2.9 Indicator Reporting

Reporting is a critical part of closing the loop in the community indicator process. Local authorities must report on the progress made by the community towards its outcomes every three years. Reporting

should aim to stimulate action on the part of council decision makers, other organisations and the wider community (Beanland & Huser 1999, MfE 1999). Councils should report the progress of indicators against specific targets. If indicator performance is found to be less than optimal, the report should include suggestions of where improvements can be made to bring progress back on track. Indicator progress reports should be pitched at a level that will appeal to all segments of the community (Hoernig 2001). While not being so overly simplistic that the report has no value at informing the community about what action should be taken to further the community outcomes (Hoernig 2001). Reporting indicator progress back to the community should ideally be performed regularly so that the community can see that they really can and are making a difference (Breuer & Kettle 2008)

2.10 Co-ordination and Integration

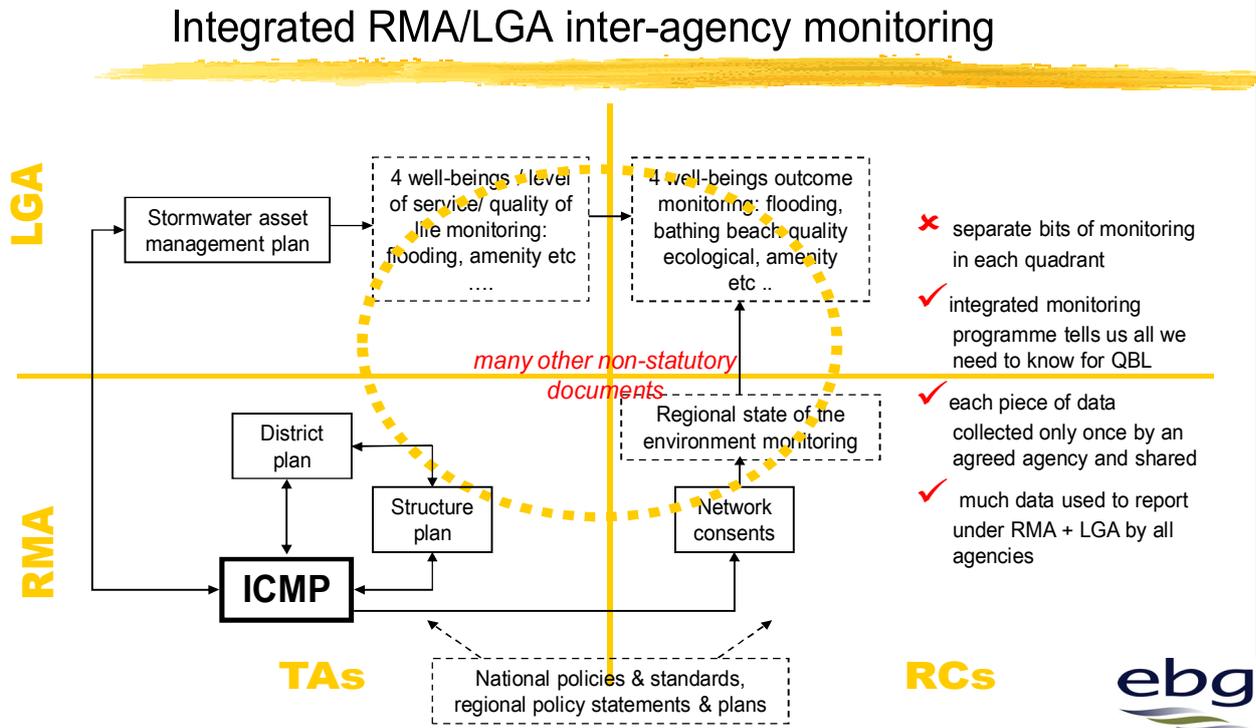


Figure 3. Integrated RMA/LGA Inter-agency monitoring

Co-ordination and integration is vital to ensure cost-efficiencies, effective implementation, and meaningful outcomes (Johnston & Memon 2007). Figure 3 above, conceptually illustrates co-ordination and integration between territorial local authorities and regional councils, as well as between RMA and LGA frameworks. Integrated monitoring is needed within councils' organisational boundaries so that there is efficiency and effective linkage between RMA and LGA requirements (Beanland & Huser 1999, Feeney & Greenaway 2007, Johnston & Memon 2007). Integrated monitoring is not restricted to integration within an authority's organisational boundaries, but also extends horizontally between different districts and regions, and vertically between national, regional and local levels (Johnston & Memon 2007). Integration is particularly important because the cost and environmental effectiveness of policy and management interventions are becoming more intensively scrutinized (Feeney & Greenaway 2006).

There is also a need for co-ordination and integration between indicator development, monitoring and reporting frameworks of local government authorities. It is common knowledge that most local authorities in New Zealand are hampered in their ability to meet legislative requirements due to budget and resource constraints (Beanland & Huser 1999). As a result of these constraints, some councils consider monitoring requirements secondary to that of core service responsibilities and consent processing, and thus allocate their resources accordingly. However, if community indicators are to be meaningful and provide a vector for participatory governance, local authorities cannot afford to skimp on providing adequate resourcing for community indicators.

Integrated monitoring in which local authorities are working together, effectively allows councils to share the monitoring workload. Some of the key benefits that arise include:

- The avoidance of duplication.
- Aids in the sharing of data, information and knowledge.
- Enables interaction between agencies resulting in improved integrated management.
- Provides a structured approach to gathering information and the development of indicators.
- Improved decision-making and policy analysis resulting in better environmental outcomes.

(Beanland & Huser 1999)

2.11 New Zealand Initiatives Promoting Co-ordination and Integration

There are some notable initiatives started by central and local government, with the intention of promoting a co-ordinated and integrated approach to indicator development and monitoring in New Zealand.

In 1999 the Quality of Life Project was established. Thus far the project has produced three reports the latest of these was in 2007, with each report following the release of data from the five yearly census. The Quality of Life Project's core objective is to identify points for action aimed at ensuring sustainable development and quality of life in participating cities (Jamieson 2007).

The Quality of Life Project currently provides information for twelve New Zealand cities. In terms of community indicators the project has led the way for well-being indicator monitoring within both local

and central government; and has strengthened the relationships between participating councils so that there is greater opportunities for councils to develop and monitor indicators for community outcomes together (Jamieson 2007, Johnston & Memon 2008).

The Linked Indicator Project, led by Statistics New Zealand, is a central government initiative for both monitoring and reporting indicators (Linked Indicator Project 2008). The project is aimed at developing a set of nationally to regionally linked indicators designed to promote sustainable development. Although an indicator set has been produced for community outcomes by representatives of local government, the project has yet to gain the support of local authorities as a viable indicator framework for all. This is partially due to alternative indicatives being advanced by local government that rival the Linked Indicator Project as the most optimal strategy for indicator integration; and Statistics New Zealand taking a fresh look at sustainable indicators as part of their community outcomes work (Johnston & Memon 2007).

3 Scoping Exercise of Local Authority LTCCPs

3.1 Introduction

As previously outlined the LGA requires local authorities to facilitate the process of developing, monitoring and reporting community outcomes. The outcomes from this process in turn form the basis on which local authorities will develop their LTCCPs. Schedule 10 of the LGA require LTCCPs to include the measures to be used to monitor community outcome progress. With the exception of a few broad legislative requirements, local authorities have almost complete control of how they go about developing, monitoring and reporting community outcomes, and how they articulate this within the LTCCP.

The scoping exercise involved assessing the first generation 2006 LTCCPs of eighteen local authorities. The eighteen LTCCPs selected represented a range of council types and sizes. LTCCPs of each council type (regional authorities and territorial local authorities) were assessed. The scoping exercise attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Are indicators included in the LTCCPs, and if so, are the indicator sets complete or incomplete?
2. Are targets set for the indicators?
3. Does the LTCCP explain the process of used to develop and monitor the indicators?
4. Does the LTCCP mention the extent of community involvement during indicator development?
5. Does the LTCCP state the local authority's intended actions to help further the community outcomes?
6. Does the LTCCP identify how and when reporting back to the community will occur?
7. Do the indicators within LTCCPs include qualitative indicators?

It is important to be aware that many of these questions go beyond what the LGA requires LTCCPs to include. Therefore, it is possible that local authorities have made greater strides in their indicator development, monitoring and reporting than what their LTCCPs may otherwise reflect. Furthermore, local authorities are likely to have progressed in their indicator work since their LTCCPs were released in 2006. However, the purpose of the scoping exercise is assess how local authorities have gone about communicating with the general public about community outcomes and indicators through the LTCCP, and to gain some insight into how local authorities have gone about meeting LGA requirements.

The results from the scoping exercise are summarised in Table 1 below. The results from the table are elaborated and discussed below.

3.2 Research Findings

Table 1. Summary of the eighteen LTCCPs scoped.

Council	Indicator status	Targets	Process outlined	Community involvement	Council action	Reporting frequency	Qualitative
Regional councils:							
Auckland	Incomplete, examples of key measures only	No	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years, combined with State of the Region Report	Yes
Canterbury	Complete list of key measures	No	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years	Yes
Waikato	Incomplete, core indicators identified only	No	Monitoring only	Yes	No	Every 3 years. Also to be reported in council website	N/A
Bay of Plenty	Incomplete	No	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years	N/A
Otago	Complete list of key measures	No	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years	No
Southland	Incomplete	No	Monitoring only	No	No	Every 3 years	N/A
City councils:							
Auckland	Incomplete, examples of indicators only	No	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years	N/A
Christchurch	Complete list of indicators	No	No. Monitoring to be finalized	No	No	To be produced in 2009	Yes
Hamilton	Incomplete	No	No	No	Yes	Every 3 years, more frequent reporting is proposed	N/A
Wellington	Incomplete	No	No	No	Yes	Every 3 years	N/A
Manukau	Complete list of indicators	Yes	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years. Also in Tomorrow's Manukau Work Plan – reported annually	Yes
Dunedin	Complete list of indicators	No	No	No	Yes	Every 3 years	Yes
District councils:							
Far North	Incomplete, progress measures only	No	No	No	Yes	Every 3 years	N/A
Gisborne	Complete list of indicators	Yes	Monitoring only	No	Yes	Every 3 years	Yes
Kapiti Coast	Incomplete, some progress measures	No	No	No	No	Every 3 years	N/A
Whakatane	Incomplete	No	Yes, development and monitoring	No	No	Every 3 years, with updates in council publications	N/A
Waitaki	Complete list of indicators	No	Yes, development and monitoring	No	Yes	Every 3 years	Yes
Selwyn	Incomplete, some key performance indicators identified	No	No	No	Yes	Every 3 years	Yes

Are indicators included in the LTCCPs, and if so, are the indicator sets complete or incomplete?

LGA schedule 10, Part 1(f): An LTCCP must, “state what measures will be used to assess progress towards the achievement of an outcome”.

All the LTCCPs assessed made some mention of indicators (otherwise expressed in the LTCCP as a measure) to measure the progress of community outcomes. However, the status of these indicators varied greatly. The majority of the LTCCPs assessed (11) did not have a complete list of indicators. Some LTCCPs, such as the Selwyn District Council’s LTCCP, had a nearly complete indicator set, with only a mere few community outcomes without accompanying indicators. Several other LTCCPs contained no confirmed indicators. Instead, the LTCCP simply listed examples of indicators that could possibly be used to measure the community outcomes.

For example the Auckland Regional Council gave examples of measures it may use to access community outcome progress. For the outcome, ‘Valuing our identity and the changing face of Auckland’, two possible measures are listed:

- Perceptions of whether the increasing difference in lifestyles and cultures is making the region a better place to live.
- Proportion of people, born in NZ, who can speak the first language of their ethnic origin.

Are targets set for the indicators?

Targets set against the community outcomes were extremely rare, with only two councils, the Manukau City Council and the Gisborne District Council, attaching targets to their indicators. The targets set by the two councils usually gave a specific normative value for each indicator, which defines when a community outcome has been reached. For example, an 80% target for the number of people satisfied with bus services, is given for Gisborne’s ‘Connected Communities’ outcome. For indicators that a specific target could not be attached, targets such as, “above the national average”, were used to define community outcome success. The sixteen LTCCPs absent of targets instead used, vague, immeasurable goals in the form of broad outcome statements or loosely written standards of success, to quantify the achievement of a community outcome.

Does the LTCCP explain the process used to develop and monitor the indicators?

LGA schedule 10, Part 1 (g): An LTCCP must, “state how the local authority will monitor and, not less than once every 3 years, report on the community’s progress towards achieving community outcomes”.

Eleven LTCCPs explained the process that was used to monitor indicator progress, but only two LTCCPs explained the process of indicator development. The councils tended to explain the process used for monitoring in little detail and in a few short sentences, along the lines of, “community outcomes will be monitored against the indicators identified”. The LTCCPs from the Whakatane and the Waitaki District Councils were the only LTCCPs that explained both the process for developing and monitoring their indicators. The development of indicators was explained through the LTCCPs in brief summary form. With the process normally involving stakeholder workshops to develop and select indicators. These workshops were primarily attended by government agencies and other local authorities. The seven remaining councils failed to explain the process of developing or monitoring the community outcomes. The Christchurch City Council’s LTCCP stated that monitoring had yet to be finalized.

Does the LTCCP mention the extent of community involvement during indicator development?

LGA schedule 10, Part 1 (e): An LTCCP must, “outline how the local authority will, to further community outcomes, work with Maori, central government, non-government organisations and the private sector”.

Although local authorities have no explicit obligation to outline community involvement within the LTCCP, it should be expected that the community will play an integral role in indicator development. However, only one LTCCP, from the Waikato Regional Council, mentioned the involvement of the community with indicators. The seventeen other councils did not mention any community involvement with indicators, with many of these councils failing entirely to explain indicator development and monitoring processes.

Does the LTCCP state the local authority’s intended actions to help further the community outcomes?

LGA schedule 10, Part 1 (c): An LTCCP must, “describe how the local authority will contribute to furthering community outcomes”

The vast majority of the LTCCPs reviewed did state the council's intended actions to further the community outcomes. The approach each local authority used to express their actions varied significantly across the LTCCPs. The Dunedin City Council, Otago Regional Council and Waitaki District Council for example, stated beside each of their indicators, how the council will contribute to moving the indicator in a desirable direction. Most commonly this contribution was through financial assistance or a management strategy. Other councils tended to provide an overriding summary of how the council intends to contribute towards all of its community outcomes and indicators. Five LTCCPs contained no information about the local authority's intended actions.

Does the LTCCP identify how and when reporting back to the community will occur?

LGA schedule 10, Part 1 (g): An LTCCP must, "state how the local authority will monitor and, not less than once every 3 years, report on the community's progress towards achieving community outcomes".

All the councils stated that they would report back to the community about the progress of their community outcomes at least once every three years as required by the Act. Only the Manukau City Council, the Whakatane District Council and the Waikato Regional Council stated that they are to report indicator progress on a more frequent basis than what is required by the LGA, whilst the Hamilton City Council has proposed more frequent indicator reporting than this. The Auckland City Council will combine its three yearly indicator progress report with the State of the City Report.

Do the indicators within LTCCPs include qualitative indicators?

Of the nine councils that included indicators within their LTCCP, only the LTCCP of the Otago Regional Council failed to include qualitative based indicators. The eight other LTCCPs included at least one qualitative based indicator. However in all the LTCCPs qualitative indicators are greatly outnumbered by quantitative indicators.

3.3 Discussion

The findings from the exercise make it clear that local authorities are at very different stages when it comes to developing indicators to measure progress towards community outcomes. All the local authorities studied had made some attempt to state the measures used to assess progress of community outcomes within their LTCCPs and therefore complied with LGA requirements. In doing so a

number of councils have spent a considerable effort developing a complete or close to complete indicator set. Unfortunately, a handful of councils appear to have made little progress in indicator development. Although a lack of resourcing and funding may have hampered some council's indicator development, the same excuse cannot be applied to some larger city councils that are yet to develop complete indicator sets. It would appear that many local authorities are yet to fully embrace community outcomes, and the enhanced opportunities for informed community based decision-making.

Only two councils have attached targets to their indicators. This result is surprising because targets carry a number of advantages for furthering community outcomes. Targets create a definitive point of success, they install a sense of urgency and importance to reaching community outcomes, and strengthen the accountability of the community towards indicator performance (Johnston & Memon 2007). The absence of targets indicates that both the council and the wider community will miss out on these benefits.

Communicating indicator development and monitoring processes through LTCCPs was overall done poorly. The majority of LTCCPs included some information on their monitoring practices, but this information was brief and with so few details that it is difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to gain an insight into the approach local authorities are taking towards monitoring. This is concerning because LTCCPs must include information about how the local authority will monitor community outcome progress.

Although not a compulsory requirement of LTCCPs, information on indicator development was rarely included. It would appear that few local authorities have involved the community during indicator development and monitoring. The purpose of involving the community in these processes is to generate meaningful and robust indicators that reflect a range of opinions (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Johnston & Memon 2007). Involving the community in monitoring helps to ensure that the public buy-in of the outcomes, so that everyone is working together to further them. Community involvement also helps to stimulate the public's interest in community outcomes so that there is genuine anticipation for the release of indicator progress reports (Johnston & Memon 2008).

The majority of LTCCPs did a sound job at stating the council's contribution to furthering the community outcomes, with some LTCCPs giving specific details. This was pleasing, since councils have no mandatory obligation to help the community in achieving its outcomes. By stating their contribution, it confers the impression of a council that is committed towards the outcomes of the community.

The majority of local authorities appear to have no intention of reporting their indicator progress at intervals shorter than that required by legislation. Nearly all councils with complete or near complete indicator sets included some qualitative, perception based indicators alongside the quantitative, scientific based indicators. However, the number of qualitative indicators is probably not sufficient to tell a complete 'story of the community'. The use of qualitative indicators ultimately provides a much richer indicator set that is more reflective of the community's values (Johnston & Memon 2007).

Generally speaking, there was no significant correlation between council type and indicator: development, monitoring and reporting frameworks. Each council regardless of its type and size appears to be at quite different stages with meeting LGA requirements. Some council's have comparatively advanced indicator frameworks, while other councils are yet to finalize or even consider the indicators that they will use. The only distinguishable relationship from the scoping exercise were that regional authorities tended to outline the process for monitoring their indicators, while only some territorial local authorities did this.

3.4 Concluding Comments

As there are very limited restrictions from the LGA to how local authorities should go about developing, monitoring and reporting community outcomes, it is not surprising that each local authority has approached their community indicator responsibilities differently. Accordingly, a lack of conformity across local authority indicator frameworks has emerged. The main benefit of limited indicator restrictions is that local authorities can adapt their indicator frameworks to best fit the character of the community.

However, there is also a major weakness to an unrestricted approach. If indicator frameworks are personalized to each district or region, local authorities will be unable to co-ordinate and integrate their community outcome progression with that of other local authorities. This weakness highlights the benefits of initiatives such as the Linked Indicator Project and the Quality of Life Project, which promote indicator conformity across local authorities and allow for a nationally driven push towards the improvement of community well-being.

The lack of detailed dialogue articulated by councils through their LTCCPs suggests that councils have intentionally kept indicator content of LTCCPs brief. The brevity of indicator information could be due to

a number of factors. Possible factors include: time pressures to release LTCCPs, lack of council resources, a compliance mentality of councils who seek to release LTCCPs with the bare minimum required, or councils have assumed that the community has no interest in community indicator process. Regardless of the factors, the lack of indicator content means that LTCCPs have limited value as a tool for promoting community buy-in towards indicators.

4 In-depth Case Studies of Local Authority Community Indicator Practices

4.1 Introduction

As stated earlier in the methodology, four councils from the eighteen councils for which LTCCPs were assessed as part of the scoping exercise were selected to be studied in-depth. The councils selected were: the Otago Regional Council, the Waitaki District Council, the Dunedin City Council and the Christchurch City Council. These councils were selected because they represent a mixture of council types, and thus have different institutional capabilities. Each council is constrained (some more heavily than others) in the resources that they can allocate towards community indicators. Yet, all the councils share close geographical ties. It can be expected that there will be both close similarities and notable contrasts to the ways in which each council has gone about meeting LGA community outcome mandates.

Interviews with council personnel responsible for community indicator processes focused on four key issues. Within each key issue there are more specific, minor issues. These are as follows:

1. The Development of Indicators:
 - The approach used by the council to develop indicators.
 - The extent of meaningful community involvement.
 - The extent of expert input.
 - Technical attributes of indicators in the form of base-line data and targets.

2. The Monitoring of Indicators:

- The approach used by the council to monitor indicators.
- The extent of meaningful community involvement.
- The usefulness of qualitative indicators compared to quantitative indicators.
- The challenges faced by the council to successfully monitor indicators.

3. The Reporting of Indicators:

- The approach used by the council to report on indicator progress.
- The influence of indicator reporting on the council's decision making.
- The consequence of not meeting indicator targets.
- The main difficulties the council encounters when meeting LGA requirements and deadlines for indicator reporting.
- Possible solutions that will bring LGA requirements more into line with the council's capabilities.

4. Integration and Co-ordination

- The extent of co-ordination and integration with other government authorities.
- The extent of co-ordination and integration between LGA and RMA monitoring and reporting frameworks.

In this chapter, the four selected councils will in turn be reviewed. The review will be structured in a similar manner to the structure of the in-depth interview described above. Accordingly, each review is split into four key headings that relate to the four key issues (development, monitoring, reporting, and co-ordination and integration of indicators). After the review, council indicator processes will be discussed by comparing and contrasting the findings of the four councils reviewed and by comparing these findings with best indicator practice in respect to the literature review in chapter two.

4.2 Waitaki District Council

Indicator Development

Figure 4. Waitaki District Council's community outcome process

(Figure 4 Removed for Copyright Purposes)

During stage one of the *Waitaki Tomorrow* community outcomes process, the Waitaki District Council identified fifteen partner organisations (Figure 4). The partner organisations were selected on the grounds that they were capable of both influencing the future progress of Waitaki's community outcomes, and would also be involved in indicator development, monitoring and reporting procedures. Each partner organisation was assigned a role, which ranged from a lead agency that contributes significantly to the community outcome process, through to a support organisation that contributes only partly to the process (see appendix 2). Of the fifteen partners involved, the Waitaki District Council was the leading agency, and had the overriding say during the proceedings.

Indicators were selected during the third stage of the community outcome process. A draft set of indicators for Waitaki's community outcomes were developed through consultation with the *Waitaki Tomorrow Partners*. During consultation, the partners were invited to comment on potential indicators, and to discard or make improvements to indicators when they deemed fit. Consultation was mainly in

the form of meetings that were inclusive of all *Waitaki Tomorrow Partners*. This approach allowed for meaningful dialogue between the partners. The Waitaki District Council attempted to gain a consensus among the partners as to which indicators would be included in the draft indicator set. There was a general desire from the partners for the indicators to tell a story of the community within the context of each community outcome. Thus, the partners tried not to isolate themselves to selecting indicators that simply measured scientific data. Instead a mixture of objective indicators, subjective measures and narrative indicators, which are able to 'flag' issues, were selected.

The draft suite of indicators approved by the partners was then passed over to Waitaki's elected councilors for review and discussion. The draft indicators were then passed back to the partner organisations, whereby the indicator suite was finalised. No indicators were selected that the council or a partner organisation did not already have data to support.

There was no consultation by the council with the community during the selection of indicators because it was not considered practical for the community to become involved. Two main reasons were cited by the council for this. Firstly, consultation with the partner organisations involved a considerable amount of resourcing and time to set-up, and then to gain the consensus of all partner organisations to a set of 47 indicators. If consultation was then extended to the wider community, the Waitaki District Council would not have the necessary resources to cope. Secondly, it was felt that most residents simply do not have the skills and necessary background to select indicators, which are appropriate for measuring community outcomes and are cost efficient. Expert input came in the form of feedback and advice from the partner organisations and council staff.

The majority of Waitaki's community indicators are supported by base-line data. However, the indicators do not include specific targets. Instead, the indicator's general objective is to move the community towards a desired outcome statement. Setting targets for the indicators was not considered feasible by the council. A major reason why targets were not set is because many of the organisations that have a considerable influence over the performance of the indicators are not based in the Waitaki District. As such, they have little interest in the Waitaki District itself and in setting performance targets for its community indicators. Similarly, many of these organisations are unwilling to set specific targets as they do not wish to be held accountable if targets are not met. Finally, there is a general feeling within the council that since the outcomes are those of the community, it is not the council's role to decide how far the community should aim at progressing.

Indicator Monitoring

Each year over half (28) of the 47 indicators are monitored based on data collected by the Waitaki District Council. These indicators relate primarily to the performance of council services. The main methods of collecting this data are through the Annual Resident's Survey, which measures the satisfaction of a cross-section of the community with council services, and from quantitative data that the council collects concerning the performance of their core services. The data relating to council servicing is collected annually to coincide with the Waitaki Annual Plan. Data collected for indicators by organisations outside of the Waitaki District Council is only received by the council for monitoring every three years to coincide with the mandatory community outcomes progress report. The three yearly data will be monitored against the base-line data from 2004/2005.

The monitoring of indicators does not involve the engagement of the community directly. Instead indicators that relate to council services are monitored by the council through the Annual Resident's Survey. In this sense, the community is not aware that council is monitoring community indicators because much of the material within the Resident's Survey is not related to community outcomes. Qualitative, perspective based data is considered by the council to be valuable if not more valuable than quantitative data because it tells a better 'community story' that more appropriately addresses the outcomes core principles.

Resource constraints, staff turnover and continuity with partner organisations are considered the major challenges to indicator monitoring. A lack of resources has meant that indicator monitoring is not as comprehensive as council personnel would otherwise desire, and often the council must make do with more superficial methods of monitoring. Staff-turnover is another major challenge, as there are only a few individuals responsible for indicators at the Waitaki District Council; therefore, once a staff member leaves, the knowledge of indicators is taken with them. Another major difficulty is a lack of continuity with the 14 other partner organisations. To be effective, this may require greater interface with the partners.

Indicator Reporting

The performances of indicators related to council services are reported annually through the council activity and community outcome sections of the Waitaki Annual Report. The annual reporting of

indicators is anticipated to benefit the community outcome process in two ways. First, it is expected to familiarise the community about the concept of community outcomes and indicators. The repeated exposure of the community to community indicators should mean that the mandatory three yearly progress report for all community indicators receives greater community interest and thus becomes more influential. Second, the reporting of indicators annually will likely improve the ease of developing the three yearly progress reports. This is because the Waitaki Annual Report provides a source of continual indicator data. Consequently, development of the three yearly progress reports will not require the council to start from scratch. Instead, council staff should gain a strong idea of how well indicators are performing from reviewing past annual reports. The complete suite of indicators will be reported through the three yearly progress report due for completion in 2009.

The extent that indicator progress reports influence Waitaki District Council decision making is expected to be largely dependent on the level of buy-in from Waitaki's elected members. Elected members are the group with the real power to change the direction of the council's governance. All of Waitaki's councilors are familiar with the concept of community outcomes. However, it remains unknown whether the performance of the community towards their outcomes will influence councilor's decision making. Also, a large proportion of the outcomes are based around the performance of services provided by the council. If the performance of these services is found to be unsatisfactory by the indicator progress reports then the council and its elected members have an obligation under legislation to respond. In this sense, the influence of indicators on the council is more about levels of servicing rather than anything else.

If indicator progress reports show that the community is not progressing towards its outcomes, the council only regards indicators that measure the performance of things with statutory significance to the council (levels of servicing), as important. Otherwise, the council has only a moral obligation to aid indicator performance. The council takes this view because the outcomes are not owned by the council but are the outcomes of the community. If the outcomes are not being achieved, the council believes the community has to hold some of the blame. It is felt that the council's role lies more in reporting where the community is going well and not so well with furthering community outcomes. If the community is not going well, the council will make recommendations about where improvements could be made. The council believes that there are no outcomes that both the community and council are not working towards. But for the council it is all about aligning council services with the outcomes.

The council does not believe it will have any problems with meeting LGA deadlines for indicator reporting, so long as adequate resources and indicator data is available to the council when required. In spite of this, the council senses that no local authority has the resources to facilitate the process of developing, monitoring and reporting community indicators as thoroughly as what it was intended in the LGA. Some of the key shortfalls cited by the council with community outcomes and indicators are that success rests on the entire community's willness and commitment to furthering the outcomes. Unfortunately, because community outcomes are somewhat detached from people's everyday life it is extremely challenging to secure the commitment that is desirable. Another weakness is that council's continue to find the concept of community outcomes and the council's required role in outcomes extremely vague. This forces the council to use a 'try as you go' approach to community outcomes.

The council imagines that the success of community indicators could be improved if central government supported local authorities in their indicator requirements through providing data and financial resources. The council also believes that it would be extremely beneficial if central government provided local authorities with a step-by-step guide to community outcomes and indicators.

Co-ordination and Integration

The extent of co-ordination and integration by the Waitaki District Council with other government authorities during indicator development, monitoring and reporting has been limited. During the development of indicators the Waitaki District Council communicated with the Canterbury and Otago Regional Councils' as part of their consultation with *Waitaki Tomorrow Partners*. However, with the exception of data supplied by the two Regional Councils for Waitaki's indicators, there is no notable co-ordination and integration during indicator monitoring and reporting processes.

At present there is no co-ordination and integration between LGA and RMA indicators for Waitaki District. Overlap and crossovers between the indicators for the two acts does occur; however, the overlap is not intentional. The idea of integrating the district's indicators has been floated about the council, but nothing yet has come of it.

Community Governance

The council believes that community governance is a possible ideal if you can find a balanced voice that represents a cross-section of the entire community. The trouble is that elected members are the individuals' with the real power to make change and influence decisions. Although councilors are elected democratically to make decisions on behalf of the community, they do not necessarily reflect the diversity of the community. For instance, there are no councilors in Waitaki that are: unemployed, Maori, Asian, single mothers or women under 40, so in many respects they cannot claim to make decisions on behalf of all people. Council staff has the task of monitoring and reporting the information about community outcomes. It is then up to the councilors to set the direction of governance. If councilors are of high caliber and actively consider all voices within the community, then community governance can become something achievable.

4.3 Otago Regional Council

Indicator Development

The Otago Regional Council took a managerial approach to indicator development, whereby the indicators were mainly selected by council staff. Originally the council intended to develop a set of indicators that were similar with all other territorial local authorities in the region. However, because the council started their indicator development at a late stage, an integrated approach was not possible since the region's territorial local authorities had already developed their indicators independently. It was instead decided after reviewing the LTCCPs of other councils, that the Otago Regional Council should develop their own separate indicators that fitted with the council's functions and responsibilities. The council wanted an indicator set that was broad, overriding and reflected the perspectives of the entire community. It was also thought that if the council's indicators were the same as the indicators of other territorial local authorities, then nothing new would be brought to the table.

The approach used by the council to select indicators was described as pragmatic. Their objective was to construct indicators that were: quick, easy, inexpensive, and will do the job in terms of what was required under legislation. Subsequently, the indicators were dominantly based on data that the council already had available. This meant that no additional data needed to be collected for the indicators.

Although the approach was mainly a managerial one, some collaboration with other parties was used to give a sense of perspective and to bring to light any major concerns or strong opinions. Councillors were given the opportunity to share their input through discussions with the council indicator team. In addition, the wider public and key stakeholders were consulted. The public was engaged by the council's indicator team. The team held publicly notified meetings at each of the TLAs within the region. These meetings were aimed at creating a forum where issues could be raised and discussed with the community. Participation was mixed, ranging from only a single person attending a meeting to 'reasonable' turnouts. The individuals in attendance were most commonly the average, 'middle of the road' citizens. Generally, nothing new or startling came out of these meetings. Road shows, displays and a questionnaire inserted within the Otago Daily Times were also used by the council to generate feedback. These methods had some success; however, the input was not statistically significant. Furthermore, the input of minority groups such as tangata whenua was not actively sought by the council.

Key stakeholders that supplied indicator data to the council were consulted through meetings. The discussions were mainly informal and superficial, which reflected a lack of understanding from the organisations concerning community indicators. Similarly, the council generally struggled to acquire information that related to community outcomes from government departments; again a lack of knowledge and lack of desire to become involved were considered possible factors for this.

Expert input came in the form of input from council staff and stakeholders such as other councils and government agencies. Other forms of expert input was not seen as necessary by the council since community outcomes are those of the community. No specific targets were set for the indicators. Qualitative targets in the form of outcome statements were utilized instead. Outcome statements set the target by stating, the direction the council intends the region to move towards with respect to its chosen community outcomes. There is a belief by the council that the community is not interested in exact targets, "people do not care how many native habitats are being protected, as long as they are being protected and the level of protection is continually improving". Targets with numerical values are considered by the council to have little usefulness because most people have no idea what constitutes an adequate level of performance. Instead people just want to know that the government is moving in the right direction. Another reason for not setting targets is that many of the indicators are outside of

the council's responsibility. Therefore, quantitative targets are not feasible since the council has no influence over their performance.

Indicators Monitoring

The council monitors the indicators by collecting data, and then analysing the data to establish trends for each indicator. The majority of the data, especially environmental data, is collected by the council. The council relies on key stakeholders to collect the remaining data for indicators. During the analytical phase of monitoring the council tries to focus on high order trends and patterns. The analysing of data is intentionally kept simple and basic to avoid the council becoming sidetracked and losing sight of the important points. This approach allows the council to quickly establish the direction that the community is heading in with relation to their community outcomes.

The data that key stakeholders supply for indicators is made available to the council either on the stakeholder's website or it is published. The council deliberately selected their indicators that contained readily available and frequently updated data.

Indicator monitoring was not inclusive of the community. Community involvement is not viewed by the council as something of immense importance. The council has found that the vast majority of the public are not interested in becoming involved in the monitoring process. The council believes that most individual's view community indicators as a foreign concept and with little direct impact on their day-to-day lives. Another factor that discourages the council involving the public is that these types of engagements have a tendency to appeal more to vested interest groups rather than the general public. Therefore, the results of consultation may not represent the opinion of the majority, which creates greater conflict and problems for the council to deal with.

One of the difficulties that the council encounters during monitoring is that two different conflicting paradigms of society exist. In this, the council has found that what people want as an ideal, such as a clean, green, unpolluted environment, is often completely different to how society operates. In other words, individual's wish for something but behave in a manner that makes achieving these wishes impossible. Therefore, some community outcomes are probably unrealistic. Another difficulty is finding

data that has the same boundaries as the region, which can be difficult since some stakeholders collect data across regional boundaries.

Indicator Reporting

The council is yet to deal with reporting of its indicators. In spite of this, it felt that the three yearly indicator performance reports will influence the council's decision making. This is likely to be in the form of shifting resources to areas that have been flagged in the report as a concern. In saying that, if indicator performance is not meeting the intentions of the community outcome statements, then in many respects it will not matter to the council. This is because the LGA is viewed by the council as an overarching statement in which all organisations and community members are expected to buy-in to and work together to further the community outcomes. If expectations are not met it may evoke criticism from the community towards the council because community values are becoming eroded. But ultimately it is up to the community to do something about it. The council feels that the community cannot expect everything to be driven by the government.

One of the major challenges faced by the council in meeting LGA requirements is prioritizing the resources necessary to complete community outcome requirements. The finds prioritizing resources towards outcomes a tough ask because the outcomes are not theirs, but legislation requires the council to give up their valuable time and resources to facilitate the process. Subsequently, community outcomes are in some ways viewed as a 'red-herring' that is on the sideline to more important practical matters. The council believes central government could help the community outcome process, through educating other government departments about community outcomes, and by providing data sets for indicators. Time issues for indicator reporting are not a problem for the council.

Co-ordination and Integration

There was little co-ordination and integration by the council with other local authorities during indicator: development, monitoring and reporting. Co-ordination and integration is considered too difficult as each region has its own individual outcomes and indicators. Many of the indicators are

however coordinated and integrated with the monitoring frameworks of the RMA. But indicator findings are articulated differently under each act. Under the RMA the findings are expressed in a rational scientific manner by the council. While under the LGA, indicator findings are likely to be expressed by qualitative statements that appeal to the lay person.

Community Governance

The council believes community governance is an achievable ideal to some extent. But, it depends on the community to lead, which is difficult since a proportion of the community do not have the skills or desire to make decisions on how the region is run. As such, it often comes down to community boards and elected members to become the community's voice. Community boards must work proactively in order to obtain community ideas and aspirations, and then have strong, motivated board members to fulfill these desires. Community value statements are considered beneficial within reason.

4.4 Dunedin City Council

Indicator Development

Indicators were selected and developed by council staff. The indicators were selected based on the criteria that data was readily available for the indicators, and that the indicators related closely to the community outcomes already prioritised. Although the community and stakeholder organisations were engaged during the development and prioritization phase for community outcomes, no consultation was performed by the council during indicator development. Indicators were instead identified by council personnel. Input received from the community and stakeholder parties during the council's community outcome consultation, acted as guidance to the council about which indicators would be the most optimal for use.

No expert input outside of the input of council staff was incorporated into the indicator development process. All indicators are supported by base-line data as this was a key factor for the indicators

selected. The indicators lack specific targets. Instead, the council uses indicator performance trends to track the progress of their community outcomes.

Indicator Monitoring

Indicators data is collected from either the council or a stakeholder and is delivered to the council's indicator team. The indicator team then plots the data against that of previous years to track progress. The council also uses its annual well-being forums as a primary tool for indicator monitoring. The forums are used to secure stakeholder feedback on: community priorities, councils perceived performance in terms of key indicators, and on the appropriateness of the indicator suite. The 2008 well-being forum was attended by 105 people, who represent a range of stakeholders including Maori and environmentalists. The stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in three separate forums (environmental, social/cultural, and economic). This approach to monitoring is considered appropriate by the council because it is collaborative and allows facilitated discussions about the progress of indicators. The forums are also considered beneficial for the participants. The forums are likely to both educate and create an opportunity for stakeholders to consider feedback about their contribution to the well-being of Dunedin's residents. Furthermore, the forums provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss issues and trends in Dunedin.

A variety of organisations supply indicator data. This data is readily available with the majority of the data updated annually. Some data is updated less frequently, namely the data deriving from the national census.

Despite the council placing considerable effort into securing stakeholder feedback, the general public is not invited to share their input. The council does not engage with the community because they do not have the resources and time available to secure the input from a representative sample of the community. There is also some assumption from the council that the majority of the community have little desire or knowledge to give informative feedback on indicators.

The notable challenges found by the council during monitoring are that significant levels of resourcing must be committed for the process to be genuine and meaningful; yet there is no additional help from central government. Another challenge is that community outcomes are likely to change over time, which means that indicators and its accompanying data will become obsolete. This will require new

indicators and datasets which are problematic to create. Some difficulties concerning stakeholder fatigue and skepticism from stakeholders that their input will not influence council's decision making, emerged during the well-being forums.

Indicator Reporting

Information on Dunedin's indicator performance is sent each year to stakeholders before the well-being forums and a summary of the discussion is sent after the forums. These reports include information outlining what actions the council has taken as a result of the forums. This gesture is designed to show that stakeholder input has been considered and will be used to influence council decision making. Indicator progress reports are expected to influence council's decisions through feeding into the LTCCP, which sets the direction of governance. A 'State of the City Report' will be prepared by the council and sent to all Dunedin residents every three years. This report is expected to communicate to the public how the city's indicators are performing and the likely reasons behind these performance trends

The council believes they have a moral obligation to aid the community's progression towards their outcomes. The council try's to encourage stakeholders to provide feedback on the actions that they have taken towards assisting outcome progress. Gaining stakeholder buy-in to community outcomes is considered the most troublesome aspect of the community outcome progress. The council would like to see more extensive indicator data sets provided by central government, to help fulfill LGA mandates.

Coordination and Integration

There is no co-ordination and integration between the indicators for Dunedin City and the indicators from other regions. However, the Dunedin City Council regularly discusses indicators with the local authorities that supply indicator data to the council. The council is also part of the Quality of Life network. Currently there are no indicators that have been purposely developed to overlap with both LGA and RMA monitoring regimes. However, an integrated monitoring regime with purpose built indicators that apply to both acts has been proposed.

Community Governance

The council views community governance is something that is achievable. Community outcomes and indicators help to promote this ideal through allowing the community to set the direction of council's

decision making. Outcomes and indicators should also provide an opportunity for the community to improve the quality of the city.

4.5 Christchurch City Council

Indicator Development

Indicators for Christchurch City were selected and developed by the Christchurch City Council and in conjunction with input from stakeholders and the community. Indicators were evaluated on the criteria that they were: reliable, supported by available data, specific to Christchurch, cost efficient and the indicators progress will directly relate towards a community outcome. Using these criteria indicators were selected and then are divided into one of three tiers:

- Tier One : **Headline Indicators** - Headline indicators will be used for public reporting on outcome progress. They provide a basic overview of progress toward achieving the Community Outcomes. These indicators are closely aligned to our Standards for Success. Each measure will be updated regularly through Indicator Reporting Sheets to assess trends and emerging issues.
- Tier Two : **Key Indicators** - These are a comprehensive set of core measures, which provide greater detail to the headline indicators. They are also closely related to our Standards for Success. These measures will be updated regularly through Indicator Reporting Sheets to assess trends and emerging issues.
- Tier Three : **Secondary Indicators** - These indicators sit behind the headline and key measures and provide an even greater level of contextual information to support decision making on complex issues. Data will be collected on measures in the secondary set but will not be reported on directly. Secondary data will be available in Excel spreadsheet form for monitoring and information provision purposes.

(Christchurch City Council 2008)

The three tier approach allowed the council to organise the indicators in a framework that is understandable for a wide range of audiences.

Key stakeholders that supplied indicator data to the council were consulted during indicator selection. Engagement with the stakeholders allowed the council to gain expert opinion on what data there was available to support the indicators, and assisted the council in choosing the most effective indicators. A proposed list of indicators was then made available to the public inviting their feedback towards the indicator set. The input received was then considered and included if relevant. The indicator set was later finalized by council staff. This approach is considered by the council to have created a relatively successful indicator suite. Although some areas remain where it is difficult to determine if progress is being made, this is because some indicators do not relate as perfectly with outcomes as the council would desire.

Expert input came mainly in the form of stakeholder input; although, the council gained valuable input from government agencies such as the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Education for the indicators that were relevant to their fields.

All indicators are supported by base-line data, with base-line data for many indicators extending further back in time than the date the indicators were initially developed. This is considered extremely useful because a trend over three years may not create an accurate picture of the situation without historical data to give it context. The indicators do not have targets. The council's mentality is that it is not their role to assign targets on the outcomes prioritized by the community. Also there are many organisations outside of the council that have considerable influence over an indicator's performance. The council considers it unwise to set targets on another organisations behalf. Instead the council aims for indicators to have a progressing, desirable trend towards each outcome. In saying that, the council is aware that a progressing trend may not necessarily indicate that a situation is optimal. For example, the number of nights Christchurch is in excess of air quality standards maybe decreasing, but this number could still be well above New Zealand standards. In these cases an indicators performance is discussed with the relevant stakeholder to identify whether indicator performance is satisfactory. This allows the council to give a far more real description of trends.

Indicator Monitoring

The indicators are monitored by the council and key stakeholders. The majority of the data collected for the indicators is sent automatically to the council's computerized indicator system. This system allows the council to build an extensive data-set for each indicator. Other information is received through contacting the organisations responsible for collecting the data. The performance of the indicators is then monitored by comparing the newly received data with the older data to establish trends. The council then describes any notable trends that emerge. As stated above the performance of indicators are if necessary discussed with stakeholders.

The public is not specifically involved during monitoring. However, some members of the public as well as stakeholders are given the opportunity to share their opinions on the performance of Christchurch with their outcomes during the 'Community Outcome Progress Workshops'. These workshops are carried out prior to the release of the three yearly community outcome progress reports.

Three separate Community Outcome Progress Workshops, a stakeholder workshop, a public workshop and a youth workshop (attended by high school students), were conducted by the Christchurch City Council prior to the release of their 2009 'Community Outcome Progress Report'. Nine separate tables, each table representing a Christchurch City community outcome were set-up at the workshops. At each of the tables the related outcome was discussed by the participants in attendance. The discussions at each table were facilitated by a council employee. The facilitator's role was to provide all participants with an opportunity to share their perspective about the outcome, while the discussion itself was directed by the facilitator to answer the following questions:

- 1 Are we making progress towards the outcome?
2. What is driving or causing change (both positively and negatively)?
- 2 What could be done in future (to further the outcomes progress)?

Participants at the workshops were free to switch tables and thus outcomes at any time; however, it was suggested that participants move to a new table every twenty-five minutes, to ensure each outcome is discussed by a variety of participants.

On the whole the workshops were successful. The council gained feedback for each of the nine outcomes, each outcome was critically discussed by the participants and council staff performed solidly as neutral facilitators. The notable weaknesses of the workshops were firstly, time restrictions, which meant that few participants were able to partake in discussions for each of the outcomes. Secondly, outcomes such 'a safe city' were more popular to discuss than some of the other outcomes, and thus gained greater feedback. Thirdly, there was a lack of participants in the young adult (18-25 years) age group and from minority groups, which may adversely affect the feedbacks representativeness. In spite, of these weaknesses the workshops can be considered a respectable first effort for community involved indicator monitoring.

The perspective of the public about outcome progress is considered valuable. It allows the council to gain a complete picture of the city's performance from ground level. This practice enables the council to pick-up areas of concern about the city's community outcomes that indicators would not otherwise detect. Also, even if a person's perspective on an outcome's progress is unfounded and untrue, their view is still important to consider, because it may highlight an area that the community needs to become better informed about. Engagement teams were used to acquire individuals for the workshops. The teams attempted to acquire individuals that represent a cross-section of the community. Workshops were not publicly notified as the council was unsure about the numbers that would attend such an event. If too many people were to attend, the council would not have the resources to facilitate the surplus participants, resulting in an unproductive workshop.

The notable challenges to monitoring included: acquiring indicator data, linking indicators with community outcomes and geographic boundaries. Data availability is troublesome because much of the data used is derived from the five yearly national censuses. However, indicators must be reported every three years. It can also become difficult to isolate indicator data to within Christchurch City boundaries, which occasionally forces the council to refer to the Canterbury region as a whole.

Indicator Reporting

The indicators are reported through indicator sheets that are published on the council's website. The indicator sheets have the following elements:

1. The name of the **Community Outcome**.

2. Name of the **indicator** and states indicator tier (Headline or Key indicators).
3. Title of the **measure** with an accompanying graph, table or map.
4. **Key Points**: describes the data e.g. any trend, level, relationship or pattern displayed in the data.
5. **What this is about**: describes what the measure relates to. It will also describe who or what has been surveyed.
6. **Data Limitations**: describes the extent to which a measure can be used and any underlying restrictions or limitations to the data. For example levels of undercount or comparisons over time.
7. **Standards for Success**: these describe what the outcome will look like when it is being achieved.

(Christchurch City Council 2008)

A monthly progress report on the cities outcomes is also created and made assessable to the public. In addition, indicators will be reported in the three yearly Community Outcome Progress Reports.

Community outcomes progress reports influence the council's decision making by informing the vehicle for change. Indicators are viewed as a compass that set the desired direction for governance. Indicators and community outcomes only gain real power to influence decision making when they are incorporated in the LTCCP, which holds a much higher status than Community Outcome Progress Reports. Due to this factor, community outcomes progress reports are purposely released prior to the development of the LTCCP. In spite of there being no defined targets, most of the outcomes are something that all key stakeholders including the council want and are working to further them.

One of the main difficulties the council has found with meeting indicator and community outcome requirements is the lack of guidance from central government. This makes it difficult for the council to interpret what is expected by the government and to select an approach to meet LGA requirements. The difficulties encountered with indicator data availability, may also require central government to marry progress report deadlines with the release of census data.

Co-ordination and Integration

The Christchurch City Council is in regular contact with Environment Canterbury about community indicators. At present the two councils are discussing the possibility of developing a consistent indicator set across both councils. Co-ordination and integration occurs between the LGA's Community Outcome

Indicators and the RMA's State of the Environment Indicators. This co-ordinated and integrated approach allows the indicators from both acts to be monitored jointly. Similar to Community Outcome Indicators, the council uses a similar computerized monitoring system for State of the Environment Indicators.

Community Governance

The council believes that there remains a lack of awareness from the public about community outcomes for community governance to become an ideal. Despite community outcomes belonging to the community, they remain too far detached from citizen's day-to-day lives, for individuals to actively consider outcomes in their everyday behaviour. In the current stage it is more likely that indicators will influence the behaviour of stakeholders rather than individuals in the community itself. Although, this is not to say that community outcomes are not working, because it appears that the majority of the community has the general desire to progress towards their community outcomes. But for the council it is more about making community outcomes relevant to the community, so that the everyday person can relate and buy-in to them.

The council promotes the community governance ideal through giving away financial grants to community groups each year. If the group's intentions are aligned a community outcomes, then these groups have a higher chance of securing funding.

4.6 Discussion

The results from the research show that each council has gone about meeting the requirements of the LGA in their own distinctive manner. The approaches that each council has adopted to develop, monitor and report their indicators have both notable similarities and contrasts with the approaches of other councils, creating its own set of benefits and challenges for both the council and community.

Indicator Development

The selection and development of indicators was approached differently among the councils studied. The Otago Regional Council and the Dunedin City Council took a mostly managerial approach to selecting and developing indicators. For these two councils, indicators were primarily selected and developed on the discretion of the council's indicator team with only loose guidance coming from

outside sources. This contrasted with the approach used by the Christchurch City Council and the Waitaki District Council, who developed indicators collaboratively. Collaboration involved the council consulting with predominantly public sector stakeholders about indicators and then attempting to gain a consensus from all parties on a decision. Although a collaborative approach will likely require greater amounts of effort and planning on the council's behalf compared to a managerial approach, a collaborative approach is more in-keeping with integrated decision making, an objective promoted by the LGA (Breuer & Kettle 2008, Johnston & Memon 2007).

Generally speaking all the councils selected their indicators on the criteria that they related to the community outcomes, were inexpensive, and data was already available for the indicators. This meant that few councils have needed to collect additional data to monitor progress towards community outcomes. The Waitaki District Council placed particular emphasis on selecting a mixture of indicator types (qualitative and quantitative), reasoning that this would allow the indicators to tell a 'story of the community'.

With the exception of the Dunedin City Council, all the councils consulted with key stakeholders during indicator development. Stakeholders usually consisted of organisations that collected data for the indicators (mainly government agencies), and organisations that are likely to have considerable influence over an indicators performance. Others such as Maori and Environmental organisations were included as stakeholders by most councils, and thus consulted.

Of the input used by councils to develop indicators, only two councils (the Otago Regional Council and the Christchurch City Council) gained the input of the wider community. In spite of the Otago Regional Council using a mainly 'top-down' approach to indicator development, it would appear that they were the most proactive of the councils at attempting to secure some community input. This proactive approach is demonstrated by the wide variety of techniques used by the Otago Regional Council to secure community input. This compared to the Christchurch City Council, who used only a single method of gaining feedback.

Despite the attempts of some councils to secure public input, generally speaking the input received was insufficient to adequately represent the community. Furthermore, the feedback from the community rarely added to anything new or different that was not already known by the councils. The lack of feedback and the uninformative nature of input received were put down to a general lack of knowledge about indicators and community outcomes from the public. These findings are concerning because it

indicates that community involvement is unlikely to have any considerable influence on the indicators being developed. Subsequently, indicators may not reflect the values of the community they are meant to serve.

None of the councils studied relied on expert input outside of the input from council staff and key stakeholders during indicator development. In addition, no council attached specific targets to their indicators; instead qualitative non-specific measures of success usually in the form of outcome statements are used. In other words, council's objective is for their indicators to be moving in a desirable direction. The reasons cited by councils for not attaching targets to indicators were that it is not considered the council's role, especially since indicators and the broader outcomes are owned by the community. Another factor that has hindered target setting is that stakeholder organisations are unwilling to set a target that they could later be held accountable for reaching. The lack of targets setting by councils will likely impair the ability of community outcomes, as there is no accountability or specific goals on which to define success.

Even though a variety of approaches were used to develop indicators, all the councils were reasonably content with their community indicator set. Each council felt their indicator set conforms to LGA requirements and appropriately measures the performance of each community outcome.

Indicator Monitoring

All the councils monitored their indicators through collecting indicator data in-house or through receiving data from a stakeholder. The data is then analysed by the council's indicator team, who plot the data against previous data to establish performance trends. The Christchurch City Councils analyses much of their indicator data with stakeholder assistance. The stakeholders provide expertise, which enables the council to determine with greater certainty if indicator performance is respectable. Both the Christchurch City Council and the Dunedin City Council held well-being forums to secure stakeholder feedback on council's perceived performance in terms of key indicators.

The Christchurch City Council has a relatively advanced computerized system for monitoring indicators. Through this system, data is passed automatically to the council from stakeholders, allowing the council to build substantial data sheets for each indicator. Other councils rely on contacting stakeholders to acquire the data, which is less efficient. An efficient indicator monitoring technique is important because

significant changes are quickly detected allowing the council to respond and counter any adverse trends (MfE 2002).

Unlike indicator development, none of the councils significantly engaged with the community directly during indicator monitoring. The councils regarded direct community involvement as something that is not feasible. This is because the community does not have the necessary background, knowledge and expertise to evaluate the performance of their indicators. In addition, it is felt that very few members of the community would be willing to become involved with the analyzing of data. Instead two councils involve the community indirectly during monitoring. The Waitaki District Council includes indicator material within their Annual Resident's Survey. While the Christchurch City Councils holds Community Outcome Progress Workshops. These workshops are run at a date close to the release of the mandatory three yearly progress reports and are used to gain the community's perception on the progress that has been made towards their outcomes. The workshops attempt to involve a cross-section of the community. Council staff facilitates the process and encourage all participants to share their opinions.

There are notable benefits for councils that involve the community during the monitoring phase, even if they involve the community indirectly. It should serve to strengthen community buy-in, raise awareness, and generate interest towards the upcoming mandatory reports (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Johnston & Memon 2007). Moreover, obtaining the community's perception on progress and comparing this to actual indicator progress may identify areas the public should be better educated about, or can highlight very real concerns that the indicators have not uncovered.

The main challenges that the councils faced when monitoring were that they lacked adequate resources to undertake monitoring in a manner considered to coincide with LGA intentions of monitoring. Due to resource constraints some council had to make-do with superficial monitoring techniques. Attaining relevant data for the indicators was also considered a challenge. The Otago Regional Council found monitoring difficult because of the two conflicting paradigms that exist in society. Subsequently, some community outcomes are unachievable because people wish for something as an ideal, but behave in a manner that makes their wish unattainable.

Indicator Reporting

With the exception of the Otago Regional Council who are yet to deal with reporting, indicator progress will be reported at least once every three years within the mandatory community outcome progress reports. The Christchurch City Council and the Waitaki District Council will also report indicator progress at more frequent intervals. The Christchurch City Council constructs a publicly assessable indicator progress report each month. While the Waitaki District Council reports around half of its indicators that relate to council services within the Waitaki Annual Report. Reporting at frequent intervals is expected to familiarise the community with community outcomes and indicators, and act to motivate the community towards furthering the outcomes.

Progress reports are expected to influence local authority decision making by highlighting the areas that require greater attention from the council, which will likely determine what areas are allocated additional council resources. If the community is not progressing towards an outcome, generally speaking the councils deem that they only have a moral obligation to aid the community's progress. This is because it is not the council's role to drive community outcome success, but only to facilitate the process.

The main difficulty cited by nearly all of the councils is the lack of guidance from central government concerning community indicators. This lack of guidance has forced many of the councils to use a 'trial and error' approach. Furthermore, some councils view community indicators as a burden since they must facilitate the process, but do not receive additional resources from central government. To bring LGA requirements better in line with council capabilities, councils would benefit from greater central government guidance about what is the expected role of councils, as well as financial resources and data sets to support indicator: development, monitoring and reporting processes.

Co-ordination and Integration

There were varying levels of co-ordination and integration by the councils studied with other government authorities during indicator: development, monitoring and reporting. The Waitaki District Council, the Christchurch City Council and the Otago Regional Council consulted with other local authorities during indicator development. Furthermore, the Christchurch City Council achieved some co-ordination and integration with central government authorities; in the form of indicator selection

advice. However, during indicator monitoring, co-ordination and integration was limited by most councils to the exchanging of indicator data. The two exceptions were the Dunedin and Christchurch City Councils, which held well-being forums and community outcome workshops respectively. These council initiatives provide an avenue for government authorities to share their knowledge about indicators.

Very little co-ordination and integration appears to exist between councils and other government agencies during indicator reporting. Additionally, there are no councils yet to co-ordinate and integrate their community indicators with the community indicators of other local authorities. The Christchurch City Council and the Canterbury Regional Council are considering developing a shared indicator suite.

The Otago Regional Council and the Christchurch City Council have integrated many of their environmental indicators under the LGA with the indicators required for the RMA's 'State of the Environment'. The Waitaki District Council and the Dunedin City Council have no integration and co-ordination of indicators.

The findings demonstrate that local authorities have failed to recognize the advantages of a fully co-ordinated and integrated approach to indicators. The 'go it alone' attitude adopted by the majority of councils has meant that each council is bearing the burden of community indicator: development, monitoring and reporting on their own. Councils should strongly consider improving the co-ordination and integration of their indicator approach. Through actively engaging with other councils, developing shared or at least partly shared indicator sets and integrating community indicators with RMA indicators, councils are highly likely to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiencies of their indicator processes, as well as ensure that their indicators are robust and meaningful (Beanland & Huser 1999, Feeney & Greenaway 2007, Johnston & Memon 2007).

Community Governance

One of the main purposes of the LGA is to promote community governance. All the councils interviewed believed that community governance is an achievable ideal. However, no council felt that reaching this ideal is straightforward. In terms of the promotion of community governance through community outcomes, its success rests on the entire community showing real interest, commitment, and taking accountability towards the performance of their indicators. While the council must play its role by

facilitating an indicator process that delivers meaningful and robust outcomes that are relevant and realistic for all.

From a more pragmatic perspective, a significant proportion of the population lacks the knowledge, experience or desire to make decisions that affect them. Thus realistically, community based decision-making will likely fall on community boards and elected members rather than the lay person. High caliber community governance will require these groups to represent the perspectives of the entire community, and actively consider these perspectives when making a decision.

4.7 Concluding Comments

There appears to be a sense of ‘reinventing the wheel’ amongst councils, since each council has predominantly approached indicator development, monitoring and reporting in their own distinct manner and in isolation from other councils. The lack of conformity across local authority community indicator frameworks is unlikely to take us further ahead from an integrated, ‘whole of government’ perspective. This is because if indicator frameworks are different, then local authorities will be unable to work together towards a shared vision of the future.

Few councils appear to fully understand their role in community indicators. Councils are charged by the LGA to facilitate indicator development, monitoring and reporting, with the community expected to play an active role in the process. Far too often councils have dominated community indicator processes, allowing few opportunities for the community to contribute and influence indicator frameworks.

5. Summary of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

Based on the empirical research findings presented in the two previous chapters, this chapter will summarize these findings by revisiting the three key research questions presented in chapter one.

Following this, a conclusion is drawn, and finally recommendations are made to improve the practices of development, monitoring and reporting progress towards outcomes.

5.2 Revisiting Research Questions

What are the ways in which different local authorities have undertaken the function of selecting indicators and developing LTCCP monitoring and reporting regimes within the LGA framework?

New Zealand's strongly decentralized approach to community indicators has forced many local authorities to use innovative and unique approaches to select indicators and develop LTCCP monitoring and reporting frameworks. By comparing the findings from the LTCCP scoping exercise against the findings of the in-depth case study, it becomes abundantly clear that councils have done considerable greater work towards community indicators than their LTCCPs would otherwise suggest. From the LTCCPs scoped, only a small number of councils had a complete indicator set, and just two LTCCPs attempted to explain the process used to develop indicators. In addition, only half the LTCCPs included an explanation of indicator monitoring. These explanations were on the whole superficial, and lacked adequate detail to allow the reader to gain an adequate idea of indicator processes. Moreover, only one LTCCP mentioned the involvement of the community.

The lack of detailed dialogue articulated by councils through their LTCCPs suggests that councils have intentionally kept indicator content of LTCCPs relatively brief. There appears to be a general assumption by councils that the community is not interested in reading detailed explanations of indicator processes. Although it is important for councils to pitch their LTCCPs at a level that is attractive to the public, the overly simplistic style used to explain indicator processes is unlikely to allow individuals to firstly, become familiar with community indicators and secondly, to entice community buy-in (Johnston & Memon 2007, Hoernig 2001). LTCCPs that more appropriately explain indicator processes are likely to spark greater interest and debate amongst the community, which should ultimately lead to the

development of robust and meaningful indicators. For this reason, better articulated LTCCPs can be considered closer in-line with LGA intentions.

In contrast to the findings from the LTCCP scoping exercise, the in-depth case study found that the majority of councils had made some attempt to gain the input of stakeholders during indicator development; this included two councils that acquired community feedback. The Waitaki District Council developed their indicators through consultation with stakeholder organisations, whereby the council gained a consensus among the organisations to the indicators used. The Otago Regional Council and the Dunedin City Council employed a managerial approach to indicator development, in which indicators were largely selected by the council's indicator team. Some community input was secured by the Christchurch City Council and the Otago Regional Council during indicator development. The Christchurch City Council invited the community to share their feedback towards a publicly assessable, proposed indicator set. Whilst the Otago Regional Council held publicly notified meetings at each of the TLAs within the region as well as road shows, questionnaires and displays to secure public input. The Waitaki District Council did not involve the community in indicator development because the necessary resources required to facilitate the process were not available to the council.

Despite the contrasting styles used to develop indicators, all the councils shared similar criteria of what constitutes appropriate indicators, namely that indicators are: inexpensive, have data already available to them and should relate closely to the performance of an outcome. Given this criteria councils have largely avoided allocating resources to collect new data for indicators. In spite of the differing approaches used by councils to develop community indicators, all the councils were largely confident and satisfied with their current indicator sets.

The one shortfall acknowledged by councils was that some community outcomes lacked indicators that appropriately measured the outcomes performance. This shortfall was particularly prevalent within the Waitaki District Council, who found it difficult to find indicators that closely related to social and cultural outcomes. The Waitaki District Council overcame this shortfall by selecting indicators that told a 'story of the community'. This was achieved by selecting a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators. Unfortunately, the Waitaki District Council appears to be one of the few councils that have recognised the importance of qualitative indicators. Quantitative-scientific measures have instead dominated most New Zealand community indicator suites. However, the community orientated nature of qualitative measures makes this type of indicator a far more appropriate measure of many community outcomes (Johnston & Memon 2007).

Indicator monitoring in reality is significantly more involved than the commonly recited statement of, “community outcomes will be monitored against the indicators identified”, stated within councils’ LTCCPs. Monitoring involves collecting data in-house or through receiving data supplied from stakeholders. Indicator data is then analyzed by the council’s indicator team. The analyzing of data involves the councils plotting indicator data against a base-line to establish a performance trend. The Otago Regional Council prefers to focus on high order trends during the analytical process, so to avoid becoming sidetracked by more trivial trends. The Christchurch and Dunedin City Councils concentrated on both broad and specific data trends. Data analyzing by these councils involves the use of: forums, workshops and other forms of consultation with stakeholder organisations. The participating organisations share with the council their expert opinion on the progress of the indicators. This input provides the council constructive feedback on which indicator reports are based.

No council studied gave the general public an opportunity to directly participant in indicator monitoring. The community is considered by councils to lack the knowledge and experience to assist in the technical process of indicator monitoring. Instead two councils engage with the community indirectly. The Waitaki District Council uses the Annual Residents Survey to acquire community perspectives on the performance of their indicators. Whilst the Christchurch City Council holds community outcome workshops, in these workshops participants are aware that their input will feed into the council’s community outcome work. The workshops allow participants to share their perspective on indicator performance, which the council considers highly valuable because the feedback often uncovers areas of concern that indicators do not otherwise pick-up.

The major challenges encountered by councils during the monitoring process were firstly the lack of resourcing available to councils to undertake comprehensive indicator monitoring. Central government resourcing in the form of indicator data sets, would go a long way to solving this challenge.

All councils studied expect to report on the progress of their indicators at a minimum of once every three years, to comply with LGA indicator requirements. Three LTCCPs stated that reporting will be carried out by the council at more frequent intervals than the LGA requires. Two councils studied in-depth (the Waitaki District Council and the Christchurch City Council), report annually and in the case of the later council monthly. Interestingly, neither the Waitaki District Council nor the Christchurch City Council mentioned more frequent reporting within their LTCCPs.

Although no council studied is yet to complete their three yearly progress reports required by the Act. Progress reports are expected to influence local authority decision making by informing the council about issues requiring greater resourcing and closer attention by the council. However, councils are careful to stress that the progress reports are completed on the behalf of the community. As such, it is not the council that should be drawing value and use from the reports, but the community. Councils in their view are expecting to work as a partner at furthering the outcomes, with ultimately the community taking the pivotal lead role.

The one difficulty echoed by nearly all the councils studied with community outcome requirements was the lack of guidance by central government, which has left many councils uncertain about their role in the community indicator development, monitoring and reporting process. This uncertainty has forced a number of councils to use a 'trial and error' approach to developing, monitoring and reporting indicators. Accordingly, many councils have gone through a period of discovery before the techniques used to meet LGA requirements were finalized. Although this approach will give each indicator suite its own local flavour, it has required some councils to expend greater time and effort on indicators than they would otherwise desire. As such, councils would benefit from greater central government guidance demonstrating how indicators should ideally be developed, monitored and reported.

What is the quality of LGA monitoring and reporting frameworks developed and implemented by local authorities?

There are two basic criteria considered by recent literature on community outcomes as important for investigating the quality of local authority approaches to indicator monitoring and reporting (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006, Johnston & Memon 2007):

- Firstly, process criteria. Local authorities should obtain a high level of community involvement for indicator development, monitoring and reporting. The feedback from the community should complement the input from experts. High community involvement is required to ensure that indicators are meaningful and represent the diversity within the community.

- Secondly, technical attributes of indicators. Indicators must be technically sound. Indicators of a high technical caliber include key measurable components, such as targets, goals and objectives. Indicators with technical merit are important because they create a sense of commitment and accountability for local authorities and the community towards their desired outcomes.

Both types of criteria, process and technical attributes, will be used to answer the above question.

Process Criteria

Very few councils acquired significant levels of community involvement when monitoring and reporting their community indicators. Councils have instead placed an emphasis on gaining the input of key stakeholders such as central government agencies, rather than focusing on individuals within the community. Key stakeholders are preferred by councils over the community because they are considered to possess the necessary background, knowledge and expertise, required to discuss indicator progress in detail. In comparison, the community is considered to hold a shallow knowledge of indicators.

The community is instead used indirectly by some councils during monitoring. However even this form of community involvement is rare, with only the Christchurch City Council undertaking workshops aimed exclusively at allowing the community to share their perspectives on the city's indicator progress. The general lack of community involvement by councils suggests that most councils have overlooked the importance of community deliberation. Community participation serves to provide the monitoring process with local 'grass roots' based perspectives on community indicators and outcomes (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2006). Furthermore, it helps to promote community outcomes as belonging to the community and the not owned by the council (Leonard & Memon 2007). Ultimately a lack of community involvement has reduced the quality of New Zealand's community indicator frameworks. Councils must provide greater opportunities for community participation if indicators are to have any effect in changing society's behaviour (Breuer & Kettle 2008).

The use of expert input during indicator monitoring was mixed. Half of the councils studied in-depth acquired expert input during indicator monitoring. Expert input came mainly in the form of feedback from key stakeholders. This input should allow the council to gain a more informed and accurate picture of their indicator situation. Whilst the remaining councils gained very limited expert input, with one

council finding that key stakeholders understanding of community indicators and outcomes was superficial. Councils must become more proactive at firstly educating stakeholders about community outcomes and indicators, and then engaging stakeholders in a manner that allows their input to contribute meaningfully to the monitoring process.

Technical Attributes of Indicators

Of all the councils studied only two councils set targets for their indicators. The lack of targets greatly reduces the quality of New Zealand's community indicator frameworks. The analytical and informative benefits of targets are well documented (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2005, Johnston & Memon 2007). Targets allow progress to be judged, and create a sense of accountability and commitment towards furthering community outcomes (Blair & Murphy-Greene 2005). Indicators were not set because most councils hold a belief that it is not their role to set targets for the indicators owned by the community. Councils instead act as a more general facilitator of the indicator process. However, the failure of either the council or the community to set targets has very likely impaired the ability of community outcomes and community indicators to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of New Zealanders.

All the councils studied had base-line data to support their indicators, with data for some indicators extending back many years. A base-line is an essential component that is required for high quality indicator monitoring to take place. A base-line serves as a benchmark for which future indicator progress can be assessed (Johnston & Memon 2007).

How well co-ordinated and integrated are local authority community indicator frameworks with RMA indicator frameworks and across local authority boundaries?

Section 93 and Schedule 10 of the LGA requires councils to consider how their community outcomes relate to other key strategic planning documents or processes and how they work with other agencies to further these.

Borrie & Memon 2005 have outlined key aims of the LGA that relate to the integration of RMA and LGA requirements for long term council community planning. These are:

- The promotion of greater engagement between the civil sector and the local and central government sectors, to further the participatory democracy ideal.
- Improve co-ordination and encourage partnerships between central and local government agencies in the voluntary sector and other service providers in responding to community needs.
- Promote greater corporate discipline in allocating financial resources with the local sector.

Integrated monitoring is required within a council so that there are efficient and effective linkages between LGA and RMA requirements. Half of the councils studied in-depth have purposely co-ordinated and integrated many of their LGA and RMA indicators, allowing both indicator types to be monitored simultaneously. Councils with multipurpose indicators in use are likely to ensure that indicator monitoring costs are minimized, the efficiency of council indicator processes enhanced, and that consistent and useful information is provided to enhance council decision making (Beanland & Huser 1999, Feeney & Greenaway 2007). Councils yet to co-ordinate and integrate their indicators for the two Acts should consider this a top priority when developing future indicator monitoring frameworks.

The extent of co-ordination and integration by the councils studied in-depth with other government authorities during indicator monitoring and reporting ranged across the councils studied. The majority of councils collaborated with other local authorities during the development of indicators. This allowed the councils to gain expert advice and guidance on which indicators were the most optimal for use. With the exception of the Christchurch City Council who consulted with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Education, no other councils achieved co-ordination and integration with central government agencies.

The extent of co-ordination and integration between local authorities appears to have declined as councils become more accustomed to their indicator monitoring roles. Apart from transferring indicator data, only half of the councils studied have consulted with other local authorities during monitoring, with the majority of the consultation coming through one-off or once yearly forums. Community outcomes and indicators would benefit significantly from more frequent and extensive interaction between local authorities. It would allow councils to improve the efficiency of indicator monitoring, enhance council's accessibility to quality indicator information and promote integrated management (MfE 2002).

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

All the councils studied have expended some effort towards developing, monitoring and reporting their community indicators and outcomes to meet LGA requirements. However, the effort expended towards community indicators has ranged abruptly across New Zealand councils. Some councils appear to have robust and meaningful indicator processes in place that are both technically sound and have gained representative community input. In contrast, other councils hold a compliance mentality towards community indicators and have done the bare minimum when designing their indicator frameworks. These frameworks have tended to be council dominated with few opportunities for community involvement.

Although, it is impossible to quantify whether indicators and outcomes are improving the well-being of New Zealand's societies, indicator sets which are positioned by the council to be relevant and meaningful to the community as well as technically sound are likely to be more influential towards changing the behaviour of individuals. It is equally advantageous for indicator frameworks to share some consistency with indicator frameworks of other regions and districts so that all parties are working together towards a common goal. Councils in future must actively engage with the community, stakeholders and other governmental departments, to ensure that the principles of community indicators and outcomes are not just achieved on paper, but in practice.

6.2 Recommendations

- Councils must provide further opportunities for the community to become actively involved in all aspects of community indicators. Far too often councils have become the dominant player in shaping community indicator frameworks. Council domination restricts community awareness, buy-in and accountability towards indicators and their performance.
- Current council LTCCPs poorly communicates community outcomes and indicators to the public. The lack of information within LTCCPs is unlikely to influence the behaviour of individuals, thus

in the current form LTCCPs do little to enhance the well-being of all New Zealanders. Councils must articulate community outcomes through their LTCCPs in greater detail, while maintaining its content at a level that is understandable and attractive to the lay-person.

- Targets should be set for all community indicators. Targets are a vital attribute of indicators because they allow progress to be judged, and create a sense of commitment and accountability towards the outcomes.
- Greater emphasis should be placed towards developing indicators that tell 'a community story'. This is best achieved through the selection of qualitative, community-based indicators.
- Councils have encountered difficulties acquiring data for the indicators that most appropriately measure an outcomes performance. This often means that councils must settle for less optimal indicators to measure performance. Councils would benefit from indicator data sheets becoming more readily available, these data sheets could possibly be supplied to councils by central government. The Linked Indicator Project and Quality of Life Project are some such initiatives that may greatly benefit local authorities. These projects help to ensure indicator frameworks are consistent across local authorities so that there is a shared vision of the future from a national perspective.
- Councils must develop more closely co-ordinated and integrated indicator frameworks to improve cost-efficiencies and indicator effectiveness. This can be achieved through greater interaction between local authorities, and linking LGA and RMA indicators together.
- It remains unknown how local authorities will go about reporting indicators within their mandatory three yearly community outcome progress reports. It will be interesting to firstly assess how appropriately these reports communicate outcome progress to the public. Then secondly, to investigate whether community outcomes and indicators have improved the well-being of communities. This could be achieved through examining the progress that the community has made towards its chosen outcomes over the past three years by reviewing the performance of each outcomes related indicators.

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Website Links

Monitoring forum

<http://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/monitoring/monitoring-forums.php>

Victoria Community indicators Programme (VCIP), Australia 2008

www.communityindicators.net.au

All council LTCCPs

<http://www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz/>

Linked indicator Project 2008

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/analytical-reports/linked-indicators/default.htm>

Appendix 1

Community Outcome Monitoring and Reporting Provisions in the Local Government Act (2002)

S.91 Process for identifying community outcomes

- (1) A local authority must, not less than once every 6 years, carry out a process to identify community outcomes for the intermediate and long-term future of its district or region.
- (2) The purposes of the identification of community outcomes are.
 - (a) to provide opportunities for communities to discuss their desired outcomes in terms of the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community; and
 - (b) to allow communities to discuss the relative importance and priorities of identified outcomes to the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community; and
 - (c) to provide scope to measure progress towards the achievement of community outcomes; and
 - (d) to promote the better co-ordination and application of community resources; and
 - (e) to inform and guide the setting of priorities in relation to the activities of the local authority and other organisations.
- (3) A local authority may decide for itself the process that it is to use to facilitate the identification of community outcomes under subsection (1), but the local authority---
 - (a) must, before finally deciding on that process, take steps---
 - (i) to identify, so far as practicable, other organisations and groups capable of influencing either the identification or 108 the promotion of community outcomes; and
 - (ii) to secure, if practicable, the agreement of those organisations and groups to the process and to the relationship of the process to any existing and related plans; and
 - (b) must ensure that the process encourages the public to contribute to the identification of community outcomes,

S.92 Obligation to report against community outcomes

- (1) A local authority must monitor and, not less than once every 3 years, report on the progress made by the community of its district or region in achieving the community outcomes for the district or region.
- (2) A local authority may decide for itself how it is to monitor and report under Subsection (1), but the local authority must seek to secure the agreement of organisations and groups identified under Section 91(3)(a) to the monitoring and reporting procedures, including the incorporation of any research, monitoring, or reporting undertaken by those organisations and groups.

S.93 Long-term council community plan

- (6) The purpose of a long-term council community plan is to:

- (b) describe the community outcomes of the local authority's district or region; and
- (c) provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of the resources of the local authority; and
- (e) provide a basis for accountability of the local authority to the community; and
- (f) provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities to be undertaken by the local authority.

Schedule 10: Council plans and reports Part 1. Information to be included in long-term council community plans Community outcomes

A long-term council community plan must, to the extent determined appropriate by the local authority:

- (a) describe the community outcomes for the local authority's district or region:
- (b) describe how the community outcomes have been identified:
- (c) describe how the local authority will contribute to furthering community outcomes:
- (d) describe how the community outcomes relate to other key strategic planning documents or processes: 110
- (e) outline how the local authority will, to further community outcomes, work with---
 - (i) other local organisations and regional organisations; and
 - (ii) Māori, central government, and non-government organisations; and
 - (iii) the private sector:
- (f) state what measures will be used to assess progress towards achievement of community outcomes;
- (g) state how the local authority will monitor and, not less than once in every 3 years, report on the community's progress towards achieving community outcomes.

Appendix 2

Waitaki Tomorrow Partners and Roles

(Appendix 2 Removed for Copyright Purposes)

Appendix 3

In-Depth Case Study (Questionnaire)

Indicator Development

1. What approach was used by the council to select the indicators for measuring the performance of community outcomes?
 - b. Why was this approach selected over other methods? In hindsight was this approach successful or appropriate? (For instance, a hands on approach vs. a collaborative approach)

2. To what extent was the community engaged
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. If not, why not?
 - c. Was the participation representative of the community or were some groups better represented than others?

3. Was expert input incorporated into indicator development?

4. Do the indicators include base-line data and targets?
 - a. If targets were included, how were targets derived?
 - b. If no, why were targets not included?

Indicators Monitoring

5. How does the council monitor their selected indicators?
 - i. Why is this approach used?
 - ii. Was the approach successful?

6. If data is collected from organisations outside of the council is the data readily available to the council and continuously updated?

7. Is the general public involved during the monitoring?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - i. Is the participation representative of the community?
 - ii. Is perceptive/opinion based feedback as constructive as scientific data?
 - b. If no community involvement, why not?

8. Are there any notable challengers to successfully monitor indicators?

Reporting of Indicators

9. How is the information collected during monitoring reported?
10. How are community outcomes progress reports expected to influence local authority decision making?
 - b. What is likely to happen if targets set for indicators are not met?
11. What are the main difficulties, if any that the council is faced with when meeting LGA requirements and deadlines for community outcomes?
 - b. How could community outcomes requirements be brought better in to line with the limited capabilities of councils? (E.g. The Linked Indicator Project, more time, resourcing)

Integration and Coordination

12. To what extent is their coordination and communication between this council and other government authorities, with respect to community indicators: development, monitoring and reporting?
13. Is there any overlap between the monitoring and reporting performed under the LGA (for community outcomes), with the monitoring and reporting required under the RMA?

Community Governance

14. Do you think the idea of community governance is an achievable/realistic ideal?