



Governance and Community Governance Well-Being - the Great Disruptor

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What this Presentation is about

- The theme of this presentation is that well-being is the great new disruptor.
- The message is the product of years of looking at how local government has been changing in different jurisdictions.
- It picks up on much of the formal and informal change taking place elsewhere (and here).
- Its message is that deep change is coming almost regardless of whether government or local government wants it or not.



What I am going to do

- **Set the scene** - In New Zealand what do we mean when we talk about community governance?
- **Scan the environment** - why be concerned about community governance?
- **Deep dive into well-being** - why it could be the biggest change in how our communities are governed we have seen in the life of New Zealand local government.
- **Describe how to use the opportunity this presents - this could become a genuine central government/local government partnership**



Setting the Scene: Community Governance in New Zealand



First let's try a definition of community governance:

- “A collaborative approach to determining a community's preferred futures and developing and implementing the means of realizing them.”
- This means co-governance, co-production, and partnership working (cf Wiltshire)
- It means respecting and seeking out communities' knowledge about their places.



How does That fit with NZ Community engagement?



- Look at the rhetoric surrounding the various excellence awards for local government.
- “The finalists include some exceptional projects that are having a profound impact on communities. The EXCELLENCE Awards finalists all demonstrate innovation, excellence in communication and consultation to involve communities in the decisions and planning which frame their future.”
- It's a picture of high performing councils working closely with their communities - and some great case studies - community engagement looks to be alive and well.



But is Community Engagement our reality

“Reflect on this comment from one of New Zealand’s most respected local government chief executives: “we talk a lot about building high trust environments in local government but we carry on building hierarchical structures that challenge the concept of trust... there is a huge risk that we will become irrelevant to our communities as they evolve and set their expectations to accommodate changing trends.”



The Ideal Meets Reality

- “Engagement is achieved when the community is and feels part of the overall governance of that community.”
- What could be local government’s strategic charter for working with its communities, the significance and engagement policy, usually looks like a tick the box compliance exercise.
- How often do councils using the special consultative procedure allow more than the statutory minimum time for public consultation?
- Do the standard myths discourage councils from doing better with engagement? Myths such as engagement is a cost to be minimised, and undermines elected members’ authority.



Why Does Community Governance Matter?

Reasons include:

- First and foremost it emphasises communities and the people who live in them as the primary beneficiaries of governing activity.
- Rebuilding trust in the political process.
- Building inclusive communities - Restoring voice and influence to the underrepresented.
- Enhancing the 'licence to operate'.
- Enabling Co-production.
- Tapping new sources of funding.



Rebuilding Trust in the Political Process.

- Post-Brexit, Trump and the rise of populism growing awareness of the impact of exclusion (inequality, lack of voice...).
- Community governance a means of restoring confidence, reaching out to and including even the most excluded.



Co-production: New Sources of Funding

- Bringing communities into decision-making helps develop solutions to local problems. Typically it also has communities stepping up to help put solutions in place.
- Pride in place opens up new sources of funding - civic crowdfunding.



What is in the Bill about well-being?

- The second purpose of local government will be to promote community well-being - environmental, social, economic and cultural.
- A new decision-making rule requiring that a Council when making a decision should take account of the likely impact of any decision on each aspect of well-being.



Implications

- 2018 is not 2002.
- The practice and understanding of well-being has changed exponentially over the past decade.
- To comply with the new decision-making rule it looks certain that councils will need to dig deep in understanding well-being across their different communities.
- It will bring local government directly into the centre of well-being - not just measurement but policy to improve outcomes for its communities - promoting requires evidence informed action, not just measurement and data.



Implications: opportunity

- For central government its well-being initiative will be driven through the living standards framework, and shape future budgets.
- It is unclear yet what government's policy will be on the relationship between Treasury's definition/measurement role and local government's role of promoting well-being.
- Contrast the different views in Minister Mahuta's address to the recent BERL Wananga and Minister Shaw's address to the Well-being and Public policy conference.
- The result? A gap which becomes an opportunity.



What is Different Between the Two Roles?

- Treasury's role is to define and measure different dimensions of well-being and produce a series of indices largely to provide macro-level evidence of the impact of government policies.
- Local government's role is to promote the well-being of its communities. By definition this means councils will need well-being data which does reflect differences within and between communities.
- The challenge for government and local government between them is how to integrate the two roles for the benefit of their communities.



Some Immediate Implications for Local Government

- Promoting community well-being is an action oriented positive purpose embedded in what is now a wealth of international knowledge and practice on how to measure well-being at a micro-level.
- The new decision-making rule will require councils to understand and take into account the different elements of well-being at a community level - or face the serious risk of judicial review challenging their decision-making.
- Without an understanding of how well-being varies within and between communities it's going to be virtually impossible to develop solutions designed to improve outcomes where that matters.



What Do Others Do?

- Defining/measuring well-being and shaping policy in response almost universally seen as a partnership between sub-national public bodies and community - co-governance and co-decision-making are critical.
- Setting frameworks, and overarching goals, objectives and indicators more typically a national government role for reasons of expertise, consistency and equity between communities.
- Exemplified in Wales in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- Canada's alternative of a civil society based well-being index similarly emphasises the importance of national standards, consistent practice, and local action.



Wales

- Each Council establishes a Public Services Board. It's convened by the Council and brings other public sector entities together to prepare a well-being plan based on 7 national goals and within them 46 national indicators.
- Overview is provided by the office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales whose focus is very much on ensuring that PSBs push the boundaries in terms of innovation in understanding and promoting well-being.



The Commissioner's Approach

- Responsible for oversight of the well-being eco-system, holding participants accountable and setting standards BUT not telling PSBs how to do their job.
- Pushing for better understanding of the **contexts, issues, challenges and opportunities between and within communities in PSB areas** (rather than only at a local authority level), and this should be clear in well-being planning.
- Adamant that community governance and engagement must be at the heart of developing and implementing well-being plans - and it is for local government to take the lead in enabling this.



England

- Wide variety of activity focused explicitly on improving well-being, not always expressed in those terms.
- GLA's Civic Crownfunding initiative, Wiltshire's community hubs, Bristol City Funds, SOLACE/PWC 'it takes a village' project.
- Growing support infrastructure - Thriving Places Index, Young Foundation/Co-op well-being index, GEOLYTIX (a commercial provider of bespoke local datasets), New Economic Foundation (linked to work on community development).
- Persistence of view that local government enabled community governance/engagement really matters - importance of local leadership



Culture Change

- Growing signs of culture change in and outside public sector.
- 'Frustrated champions' in Wales.
- Former competitors sensing the well-being shift as setting the tone for more collaborative working - creative industries and arts and culture.
- Well-being indicators as a signal for CSR activity.
- Beginnings of an 'it's OK to fail' culture.
- Highlights the power of information - knowledge making it harder to ignore poor outcomes.



Coventry: Innovation in Well-being Presentation

Life expectancy at birth in Coventry 2011-2015

Coventry's bus route 10 crosses the city's more affluent and more deprived neighbourhoods. This makes it useful to help illustrate the stark differences in life expectancy across the city – a gap of 10 years for males and 8 years for females.



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Unfinished Business

- Implicit (and becoming explicit) in both the Welsh statutory and English non-statutory practices is the importance of involving communities. The next big challenge is embedding community engagement.
- In New Zealand working hand in hand with communities in measuring well-being and determining how to improve outcomes will be an essential part of the new role.
- There is a huge amount of willing and capable experience on which to draw.



Using the Well-being Opportunity

- Understand the different aspects of well-being across your communities and you have an unparalleled advantage as the natural advocate and facilitator for effective service delivery by others.
- Underpin this through consistency. Local government needs to develop a framework for setting domains and indicators within the four well-beings which can be used by every Council. Without this well-being discussions will be the Tower of Babel.
- Do it well and local government becomes the natural partner of central government in working with communities.



Let's get practical

- For local government to succeed, excellence in community engagement (ideally co-governance) will be pivotal.
- There is good substantive practice we can draw on from overseas, and good opportunities in current requirements on local government.
- First let's make the significance and engagement policy work. It could be a negotiated charter between a Council and its communities setting out how it wants to engage, and how it will support its communities in engagement.
- Next let's pick up on some of the really good stuff from offshore experience.



The U.K. - Wiltshire's area boards

Area Boards are quite different from traditional committees.

The public are welcomed and encouraged to participate fully in the debates and decisions - it's genuine co-governance.

New Zealand councils could replicate this experience through community boards or Council committees.

[Devizes Area Board ... 4 years on](#)



Innovations in Democracy

- Citizens' juries - a great way of building consensus around often difficult and controversial issues.
- Participatory budgeting - involving communities in determining how best to spend money allocated to their place - a growing and very successful approach.
- Civic crowdfunding - builds on conventional crowdfunding to create ways of engagement to build local social and physical infrastructure.
- Support your 'frustrated champions' for community governance - encourage a culture of "it's OK to fail".



Some final thoughts

Good community engagement is about building capability over time - an investment, not a cost to be minimized.

Approaches such as co-governance strengthen rather than reduce the leadership role of elected members.

Councils practicing co-governance strengthen their credibility both as authorities on the well-being of their communities, and as advocates and representatives for those communities in dealing with central government across the full range of central government activity.



Conclusion



My very final point:

For government to succeed with its well-being policy, local government is a necessary and equal partner.

Assert this reality at every opportunity you have.

