COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE:

RESOURCE KIT

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"Today ***government*** is seen increasingly as one of several institutional players, like business or labour …. There is a need for a word to describe a ***process*** distinct from government itself - hence ***governance***"

Canadian International Devt Agency

Governance can be thought of as a process which brings together all the parties who have pieces of the jigsaw which, once made, will be the picture of that community's future.

"Community-building is the soul work of ***governance***. It is about creating support and connection amidst a local and global landscape which is increasingly insecure and fragmented."

Vivian Hutchinson

1. The concept of community, in a locational sense, is a key one. Communities are about individuals acknowledging that they have a collective identity, that they may have common interests which separate them from other communities and that they may have a common vision. Implementing that vision requires processes that enable collective action. Community is a useful concept at many different scales, ranging from global to village, neighbourhood or locality. In many parts of New Zealand, community at its smallest scale may be identified by facilities in which individuals have a collective interest such as a school, shopping centre, health clinic, probus club, or a sports club.

2. Problems of ensuring a sustainable future and an acceptable quality of life are increasingly complex and involve complicated inter-relationships between social, economic, environmental and attitudinal factors. Some overseas commentators have dubbed these as the "wicked issues".

3. Government – at whatever level – cannot solve the "wicked issues". This became evident in the early 1980s. It is equally evident that reliance on market mechanisms has also failed to produce the environmental and quality of life outcomes to which we aspire.

4. Community Governance is a concept that recognises that "ownership" of the "wicked issues" rests with the community as a whole. Effective ways forward will require the cooperation of many participants each of whom has a part to contribute to an answer. Participants will be individuals and organisations from the private sector/ society at large, the public sector/governments and the community/not-for-profit sector.

5. The outcomes that we share as members of a community relate to environmental sustainability and quality of life, as well as economic performance. We do not have good measures as to conditions in these areas. This is a marked contrast to the number and variety of indicators with regard to financial and economic performance. We need to develop good outcome indicators – across the board.

6. Elected governments at national, regional, territorial and community board levels have the democratic legitimacy to provide a strategic leadership role in establishing and maintaining community governance processes. No other bodies have such a mandate. Governments also have some competencies that are generally scarce. These include areas of technical and professional expertise, networks and contacts and experience and skills in running decision-making processes in a community context (such as strategic and annual planning processes).

7. There are 6 key principles underlying effective community governance. (Based on Clarke and Stewart.):

   1. *The concern of government extends well beyond the services provides to the overall welfare of the area.*

   2. *Government's role in community governance is only justified if it is close to and empowers communities and their citizens.*

   3. *Government must recognise the contribution of other organisations – public, private and voluntary and see its task as enabling (not controlling) that contribution.*

   4. *Government should ensure that the whole range of resources in a community is used to the full for the good of its area.*

   5. *To make the best use of those resources, there must be ongoing review (learning) as to how needs are best met and a willingness to act in innovative ways.*

   6. *In showing leadership, the government must seek to reconcile, to balance and, in the final resort (when it is the funder), to judge the diversity of views and interests.*

8. There is a clear distinction between a government role in funding and providing specific services and its facilitation of community governance. As a service provider clarity, quality, value for money effective feedback and consultative processes are central. Decision-making remains in the hands of the government. In achieving community governance the key skills lie with facilitation, networking, dialoguing and participation in ways that recognise that decision-making is spread across a range of groups and individuals.

9. Community governance implies that power should be exercised as close as possible to citizens and local communities. This is because the most useful learning takes place at grass-roots level. Also, with the rapid pace of change and variation in circumstances from place to place, it is essential solutions are adaptable and flexible. Hence, they must be as close to citizens and local communities as possible.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Implementing community governance principles is something that local government can get on with straight away. Facilitation, network and dialoguing with other "stakeholders" do not require legislative change.

2. Community governance does require good mechanisms for vision building and conflict resolution at the community level, so effective use of community boards and informal mechanisms such as local ward committees elected at "village hall meetings" are critical. So too is effective coordination of Westminster based and Maori governance processes.

3. As the community governance model is increasingly well implemented, it will inevitably and usefully put pressures on existing structures and relationships at central - regional - territorial and community board levels. Innovation and pilot schemes that challenge the traditional frameworks should be supported, but structural change is not seen as the key enabler for making progress.

4. While legislative change is not the key to progress, it would assist. It would be beneficial – both psychologically and legally – for local government to be given either a power of general competence or the status of a legal person.

5. When major constitutional reform is next considered in New Zealand, constitutional protection should be given to a government structure below the national level.

"The government in any locality is shared [between many players]. …. the need for integration has become all the more important because of the many public policy issues which cross organisational boundaries – such as environmental issues and the aspiration to sustainable development, problems of crime and the aspiration to community safety, discrimination and the aspiration to an equal society and so on. Some of these are problems which are imperfectly understood and without clear solutions the "wicked issues" in the sense that they appear intractable; others are ones which simply cross boundaries such as provision for the elderly, leisure provision and so on.

Most localities also face major transformations:

- *Many towns and cities have lost their traditional economic role. Industries have disappeared or the commercial viability of town centres is threatened by out of town development.*
- *Uncertainty and change have replaced old certainties.*
- *Economic change has brought social consequences, as the costs of those changes are born by different groups within the area.*
- *Environmental issues grow as problems of urban transport magnify and physical infrastructure requires renewal.*
- *The changing nature of agriculture and rural employment and challenges to village life through the loss of local services and amenities and the advance of commuters have brought changes in the countryside too.*

Each locality has to establish its own agenda, deal with its own problems and realise its own opportunities. It has to find its own role in an era of transformation. *National policy will be part of the story but is inadequate by itself. Each locality has to find its own directions. That will require a shared understanding of problems and opportunities and of an agenda for change. Many agencies and organisations – both public and private – will be involved in pursuing that agenda. The danger lies in fragmentation. **A capacity for integration is required to create a shared awareness and determination to act together and in a coherent way wherever possible.** This requires leadership – and the local authority as the elected authority for the area is obviously best placed for this.*

The new emphasis on the role of local authorities and community governance requires us to develop a capacity for integration – through shared understanding of issues, problems and opportunities; and through that, an enhanced capacity for joint action. At the same time there is also a need to nurture the activities and organisations which make up civil society to help localities achieve their aspirations and resolve their own ideas."

Source:
Michael Clarke and John Stewart (1998) *Community Governance, Community Leadership and the New Local Government*

(Professors Michael Clarke and John Stewart are at the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham, England)

On the 2nd and 3rd of June the Christchurch City Council on behalf of Canterbury Local Government hosted an invitation only forum at the Christchurch Convention Centre. Its focus was to look at the challenges facing government in Christchurch, Canterbury and New Zealand over the next few years. The attendees of the forum included Mayors, Councillors, Community Board Chairs and Chief Executives from Canterbury/West Coast local government, a cross-section of Mayors, Chief Executives and others from New Zealand local government more generally, academics, local government consultants, central government civil servants and a relatively wide range of representatives from the community sector.

The starting point for the forum was a paper "Taking the Canterbury Communities into the New Millennium, the Role of Local Government" which was circulated before the forum.

The forum was structured into 4 sessions. Each session was lead by presentations from 2 out of 3 overseas speakers (Professors Michael Clarke and Robin Hambleton from the UK and Professor Barbara Ferman from the USA). Their presentations were followed by responses from New Zealand contributors (David Caygill, Peter McKinlay, Vivian Hutchinson, Garry Moore, John Chaffey, Sukhi Turner, Derek Fox, Phil McDermott, Mike Richardson). Each of the 4 sessions was then followed by structured syndicate work in which the groups addressed the following questions:

- What are the purposes of government?

- What are the objectives of public policy?

- Is the concept of community useful?

- Do we agree with the principles of community governance?

- How do we increase the capacity of the community to engage in community governance?

- What are the best ways forward?

Papers, summaries and an audiotape from the Christchurch Forum are available.

This community governance resource kit is intended to capture the key arguments and directions for change.

1. Most progress will be made at the local level. As set out above, Councils are uniquely placed to exercise strategic leadership. For those who accept the challenge there are processes already in place on which they can build. During the next 12 months, examples of good practice will increasingly be developed and identified. These will be examples of groups and individuals agreeing on what they want to achieve and coordinating their funding and efforts so that the responsibility for resourcing and achieving the outcome is shared.

2. At the local level, our role is one of strategic leadership and involvement in most cases. There are potentially many stakeholders locally who we should encourage to "buy-in" to the community governance model. In some cases there will be organisations who have been promoting the principles for some years.

3. A national community governance network needs to be developed. This will have the following aims:

    1) *Facilitating exchange of ideas and good practice.*

    2) *Providing peer support and where appropriate literature search and research to help with methodological issues.*

    3) *Promoting and explaining the concept to groups and individuals. In the medium term this will be particularly important in facilitating changing relationships with central government.*

4. It is critical that a community governance network is not seen as the preserve of local government. While several of its most active participants will undoubtedly be territorial and regional councils, active involvement from other types of agencies, the private sector and individuals is critical. The concern is the future of our communities, not the future of local government.

5. Local Government New Zealand should take the responsibility for articulating the community governance vision to central government following the October elections and also for pursuing the separate, but related, case for legislative change in the direction of a power of general competence.