

Sustainable Community Planning

Leveraging software solutions to drive
the strategic community plan



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The information presented in this white paper represents the current view of Technology One Limited (TechnologyOne) on the Strategic Management in the Public Sector as at August 2010. It is provided as a general discussion paper only intended to encourage customers to share their thoughts and requirements on the challenges and solutions on strategic management in the public sector. This white paper should not be interpreted as a commitment on the part of Technology One Limited, due to changing market conditions and changing customer requirements, nor does it constitute professional advice or pertain to the individual requirements of your organisation. Please contact Technology One Limited if you wish to discuss the issues raised in this white paper in the context of your specific organisational requirements.

The changing local government landscape

Traditionally, councils have been depicted as being concerned only with the ‘three Rs’ – roads, rates and rubbish. This perception has been driven by a large expectation from rate payers that local government will provide important infrastructure services in an efficient and cost-effective way.¹ However, this narrow viewpoint does not even scratch the surface of the role that councils now play within their communities.

As well as providing essential infrastructure services, councils deliver an increasing number of community lifestyle facilities and services, such as parks and libraries, and coordinate a range of community events that target different groups with varying demographics.² Councils also put high expectations on themselves and view their role as to provide public services, make wise decisions in the interests of the community in a balanced way for the greatest benefit, to initiate, coordinate and serve as a catalyst for local effort, and to represent the community in the state/territory and national contexts.³

In trying to fulfil this role, councils have encountered escalating financial constraints, which brings into question whether councils are sustainable.

A key issue faced by local government is that it accounts for around only five per cent of the total size of government in Australia and its own revenue source is an even smaller share. This means it can not be all things to all citizens.⁴ Councils have to decide what they can and cannot deliver to their communities.

This has led to an increasing number of councils engaging their communities in the planning process. Specifically, community consultation is a two-way communication process that invites community involvement in the decision making process. Through a range of engagement activities, the community is invited to comment on issues, strategies and services that shape their future.

According to the *United Nations Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement*, effective engagement generates better decisions and delivers more sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits for a community.⁵ Involving the community in planning for its future means that councils are able to prioritise key activities, build understanding of the rationale behind decisions and take ownership of the region’s strategic direction.

A number of councils in Australia, including Brisbane City Council in Queensland and Whyalla, Playford, Mount Barker and Campbelltown Councils in South Australia, adhere to the model of community engagement developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

“The community plan is a great way to understand and engage with your community”

Tony Hawyard, South Burnett Regional Council



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1 Local Government Association of Queensland, *Community Satisfaction Tracking Study*, 2009, p2.
2 Dollery, B, *Government Obligations and Cost Shifting*, 2005, p1.
3 Darwin City Council, *About Council*, 2010.
4 Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, *Are councils sustainable?* 2006, p7.
5 IAP2 Australasia, *United Nations Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement*, 2005.

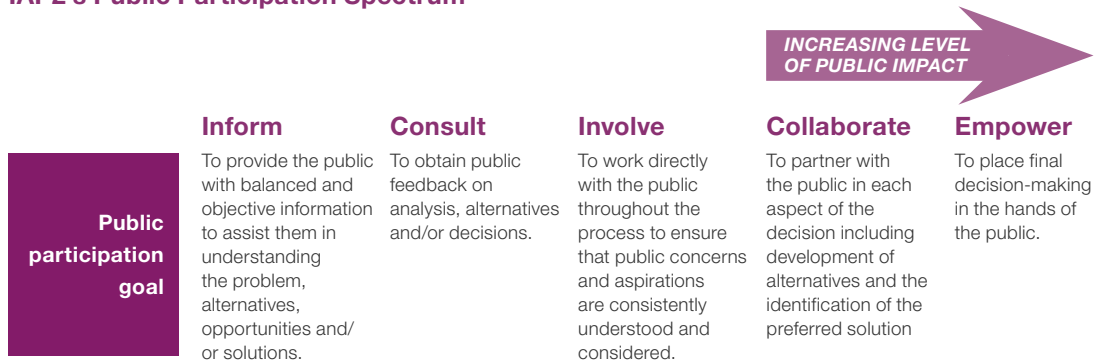
The core values of the IAP2 are as follows:⁶

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Councils that have adopted IAP2's public participation model are signaling their alignment with these core values and their commitment to involving the community in the decision-making process.

The degree to which the community is engaged does depend on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of concern or interest in the decision to be made. Therefore, IAP2 developed a public participation spectrum to assess the level of influence a community can have on the decision and to what level they should be engaged. The version of the spectrum shown below provides an overview of the five levels on the spectrum – inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum



⁶ International Association of Public Participation, *IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation*, 2007.

The community plan as a driver of change

Recent legislation has recognised the role community engagement plays in improving local government accountability and sustainability. New Zealand and New South Wales have already introduced legislation mandating the development of long-term planning procedures (including a community plan) with a view to ensuring greater accountability in the delivery of council services.⁷

The New Zealand Local Government Act 2002 requires councils to identify community outcomes for the future of their region through community engagement. The Act is designed to ensure a democratic and effective local government that caters for the diversity of communities.⁸

Similarly, the New South Wales Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009 requires councils to have a community strategic plan that identifies the main priorities and aspirations for the future and local planning for a ten year period.⁹

Queensland is the latest state to embrace community planning through its Local Government Act 2009, which came into force in July 2010. This Act aims to create more accountable, efficient, effective and sustainable councils through the creation of a series of planning procedures. An important component of the legislation is the overarching community plan which outlines the goals, strategies and policies for implementing each council's vision for the future of the area throughout the plan's lifetime.¹⁰

While this legislative change presents a number of challenges for councils in delivering the community plan, it also brings opportunities by ensuring the strategies they are funding are actually the ones that the community desires.

The tip of the iceberg

There is no denying that there is a growing trend towards community planning in Australia. The introduction of the legislation in New South Wales and Queensland indicates that governments are looking to improve council sustainability by mandating community engagement in the planning process and encouraging the streamlining of reporting against these plans.

In both states, councils are required to produce a number of planning and accountability documents. Some examples include:

- Annual reports
- Corporate or strategic plans
- Annual operational plans
- Delivery programs
- Long-term community plans
- Long-term financial plans
- Long-term asset management plans
- A report on the results of an annual review of the implementation of the long term plans

Of particular importance is the community plan which will sit above all other planning processes of council, including strategic land use planning and corporate planning. The plan will assist in better managing competing pressures and assist in meeting the lifestyle needs and aspirations of the community.

⁷ New South Wales, Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009; New Zealand Government, *Local Government Act 2002*.

⁸ New Zealand Government, *Local Government Act 2002*.

⁹ New South Wales, *Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009*.

¹⁰ Queensland Government, *Local Government Act 2009*.



Community plan delivery

Although the legislation differs between Queensland and New South Wales, the message is clear – community engagement will be used as the vehicle for more accountable, comprehensive and effective planning.

Preparing the community plan, however, is not a simple task. In Queensland, the Government has outlined five distinct phases that all councils must follow to prepare their plan.¹¹ New South Wales, however, provides broad guidance to councils, but does not mandate specific phases like Queensland. Interestingly, a review of the processes used in both states identified a number of synergies in models used to incorporate the community as part of the planning process. The diagram below provides a broad snapshot of some of the common steps that councils use to prepare their community plan and demonstrates the rigorous community engagement that must occur for successful planning.

Common steps to community plan delivery



These common phases emphasise the mandate that has been placed on councils to demonstrate an understanding of community priorities, both now and into the future.

It is important to note that the development of the plan is not the be all and end all in the process. The legislation in both Queensland and New South Wales also denotes annual reporting requirements for councils against their community plan, further highlighting the need for councils to demonstrate meaningful and measurable community interactions and consultation not just during plan development, but on an ongoing basis.

This process will be made easier for councils that regularly track interactions with the community as this will enable:

- A greater understanding of community issues and trends
- Greater visibility of the depth and reach of community engagement activities
- The ability to quantify interactions and measure the success of service delivery

¹¹ Queensland Government, *Report on the annual return on community engagement, 2009*, p8.



A new era for councils

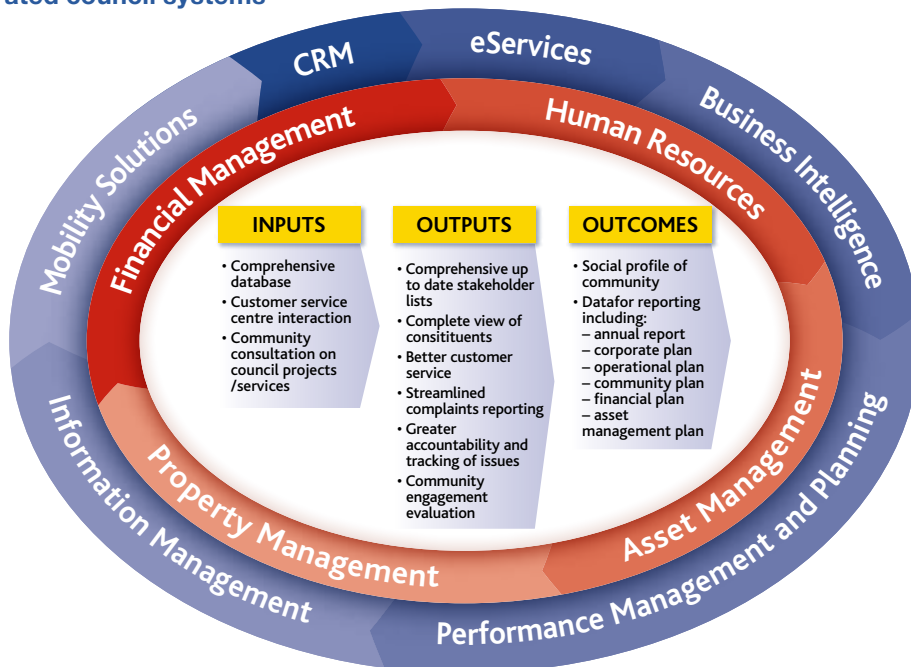
This emerging trend means the mandate for councils is clear – the community plan will be at the heart of council operations – however, the question now is “how do you embed your community plan within your council and measure its success?”

The crux will be in ensuring that council business practices are structured in a way that facilitates the ability to capture all relevant inputs from the community (such as customer information, customer service centre interactions, and community consultation on council projects and services) to enable the delivery of outputs and outcomes required by councils to measure and report against their various plans.

One key challenge in achieving this outcome is the tendency for councils to store information (such as ratepayer contact details, customer service interactions and community engagement) in divisional information ‘silos’. Storing data in these silos creates issues such as data duplication and access limitations, and prevents effective analysis, thereby hindering a council’s ability to gain a comprehensive view of its community, their issues and priorities.

One potential solution and opportunity for councils is the implementation on an integrated solution for community engagement, which provides a 360 degree view of all council stakeholders including ratepayers, residents, businesses, developers, solicitors and community representatives. An integrated system such as this ‘talks’ to other organisational systems and facilitates the process of gathering inputs at a whole-of-council level, leading to a wide range of outputs and outcomes for the community and delivering transparency across council departments. The diagram below suggests how this process would work through using integrated council systems.

Integrated council systems



In this process, an integrated system would provide councils with a vehicle to engage with its community and report on engagement outcomes, both at a micro and a macro level. Benefits of the system include:

- Improved data quality through the removal of duplicate, out-of-date and corrupt customer records
- Improved data security through improved recording processes
- A comprehensive view of all customers – including both ratepayers and residents as well as suppliers, businesses, solicitors and developers
- The ability to measure the *effectiveness* of council spend (as opposed to just dollar value of council spend)
- Streamlined planning and reporting processes at both a micro and a macro level
- Improved council sustainability through the ability to measure and report on council spending programs, performance indicators and community engagement activities

The challenge now is for councils to embrace the new era of greater accountability to their community by ensuring that the community plan is not only at the heart of council operations, but that community engagement programs are successfully executed and their value realised as well.

“There is little point in planning a preferred future, setting desired outcomes, and using scarce resources in pursuit of these community planning outcomes if there is no way of determining whether these have had the desired impact”

Chris Rose, Logan City Council



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Achieving the vision

It is important to note that this new era of greater accountability does not simply end with more efficient data capture. The next step is to 'close the loop' through the provision of an end-to-end process where councils report back to their community on the progress of their various plans and showcase tangible results.

Councils need to adopt systems and processes that enable the organisation and staff members to formulate, document, execute, report and monitor council's organisational and legislative planning requirements. Council systems need to be able to store correct name, property, land and address details while effectively managing financial performance, departmental performance and ensuring that all information is seamlessly integrated for visibility across the organisation. Improved transparency enhances corporate reporting and this in turn can be supported by evidence from community consultation.

A combination of integrated systems including tools for customer relationship management, performance planning, business intelligence and reporting, human resources, financial management, document management, eServices, and a robust central property database, provides a bridge for councils to step into the new era of accountability and sustainability. Systems that 'talk' to each other will enable superior data capture and more effective and efficient community engagement practices. This will enable councils to build a platform for the future based on integrated strategic and operational planning and where corporate reporting is based on data and evidence from key areas of input.

Working with TechnologyOne

TechnologyOne is looking to work collaboratively with councils to create an integrated product solution suite that enables more streamlined community planning and reporting processes.

This solution would collect, track, approve, correspond and report on all two-way communication between a council and its stakeholders. All data from this two-way communication would be held in one overarching database, rather than within separate siloed divisions of a council.

To facilitate the development of a tailored solution, TechnologyOne is seeking to work with councils to investigate:

- The systems currently used by councils including identification of inputs and outputs
- The community engagement activities currently undertaken by councils
- The objectives councils have set surrounding community engagement practices
- The outputs that councils ultimately desire from their systems

A key element of TechnologyOne's solution suite will be its flexibility. Councils will have the option of undertaking a total transformation of existing council systems or partnering elements of TechnologyOne's solution with existing systems to facilitate a more progressive transformation in line with system upgrade timeframes.

TechnologyOne's systems will enable councils to place community engagement and the community plan at the heart of council operations, thereby improving accountability and transparency to the community.



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Example 1 – Tracking stakeholder interaction

Councils interact with hundreds of stakeholders on a daily basis, making it easy for some stakeholder interactions to slip between the cracks. To prevent this and ensure the benefits of community input are realised, councils need to collect, track, approve, respond and report on the interactions. By using an integrated CRM system, councils will be able to have a single view of every stakeholder to track the progress of his or her interactions.

Example 2 – Facilitating community engagement

Surveys are an effective way to gauge community attitudes regarding the delivery of council services. In order for a survey to uncover the most useful results, it needs to be distributed to relevant stakeholders. These relevant stakeholders will be the target market of the service and the stakeholders who already use the service. An integrated council solution for community engagement could enable council to:

- Identify those stakeholders who have interacted with council regarding the provision of a particular service
- Access data outlining which stakeholders currently use the particular service
- Undertake a search of its constituents and select those stakeholders that align with the service's target market

The survey can then be distributed to this relevant stakeholder list to receive the most relevant feedback regarding service provision.

Example 3 – Improving community relations

Councils are increasingly expected to provide community events as part of their service delivery to their community. An integrated CRM system can enable councils to plan, hold and report on the success of community events. Key stakeholders can be identified through their individual profiles to assist in planning a community event. For example, to hold a community event designed to teach families about the rich Aboriginal history of the area, it would be beneficial for council to engage members of the local Aboriginal community to provide input. Using an integrated CRM system, council could:

- Identify key stakeholders who might have expressed interest in this topic or have received previous communication
- Track RSVPs to ensure the event is sufficiently planned
- Track attendance at the event and analyse event data (e.g. RSVPs versus actual attendance figures)



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About TechnologyOne

TechnologyOne (ASX: TNE) is a leading enterprise software solutions provider. For more than 20 years we have been providing deeply integrated software solutions for business, government, financial services, health and community, education and the utilities sectors. Tens of thousands of people each day use our world class solutions, which we develop, implement and support. Our organisation wide solution suite, integration solutions and custom designed solutions provide world-class services which are based on leading edge technology and are backed up by a substantial R&D program providing our customers with a long term, secure and valuable partnership. TechnologyOne employs more than 750 people and has offices in each State and Territory of Australia, as well as New Zealand, Malaysia and the United Kingdom.



This whitepaper was prepared and researched by the Phillips Group on behalf of TechnologyOne.

Phillips Group is a leading Australian communication consultancy with experience across a range of industries and communication capabilities. Established more than 30 years ago, Phillips Group has delivered a number of internationally recognised and awarded communication strategies.

Within its three core areas – communication, marketing and crisis management – Phillips Group recognises the importance of providing expert advice, developing creative strategies and delivering measurable results. Phillips Group is particularly known for its development of robust and innovative community engagement strategies for local government.



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