

# AGENDA

## RĀRANGI TAKE

NOTICE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF

# COUNCIL

to be held on **Wednesday, 18 February 2026**, commencing at **12:30pm** in the Council Chambers,

36 Weld Street, Hokitika and via Zoom

Chairperson	Her Worship the Mayor
<b>Deputy and Northern Ward Member:</b>	Cr Burden
<b>Northern Ward Members:</b>	Cr Mackenzie, Cr Maitland
<b>Hokitika Ward Members:</b>	Cr Gillett, Cr Martin, Cr Walker
<b>Southern Ward Members:</b>	Cr Manera, Cr Munns
<b>Iwi Representatives:</b>	Kw Madgwick, Kw Tumahai



In accordance with clause 25B of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002, members may attend the meeting by audio or audio-visual link.

## Council Vision

*By investing in our people, caring for the environment, respecting the Mana Whenua Cultural heritage, and enabling investment, growth, and development we will enrich our district and the people that reside here.*

# Purpose

The Council is required to give effect to the purpose of local government as prescribed by section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002. That purpose is:

- (a) To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- (b) To promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

## 1. KARAKIA TĪMATANGA OPENING KARAKIA

<i>Kia hora te marino Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana Hei hurahai mā tātou I te rangi nei Aroha atu, aroha mai Tātou i a tātou katoa Hui e! Tāiki e!</i>	<i>May peace be widespread May the sea be like greenstone A pathway for us all this day Give love, received love Let us show respect for each other Bind us all together!</i>
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## 2. NGĀ WHAKAPAAHA APOLOGIES

## 3. WHAKAPUAKITANGA WHAIPĀNGA DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members need to stand aside from decision-making when a conflict arises between their role as a Member of the Council and any private or other external interest they might have. This note is provided as a reminder to Members to review the matters on the agenda and assess and identify where they may have a pecuniary or other conflict of interest, or where there may be a perception of a conflict of interest.

If a member feels they do have a conflict of interest, they should publicly declare that at the start of the meeting or of the relevant item of business and refrain from participating in the discussion or voting on that item. If a member thinks they may have a conflict of interest, they can seek advice from the Chief Executive (preferably before the meeting). It is noted that while members can seek advice the final decision as to whether a conflict exists rests with the member.

## 4. PŪRONGO KAIMAHI STAFF REPORTS

- **Simplifying Local Government** (pages 3-8)  
Chief Executive to speak to the report.

**DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING  
ON 26 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 1.00 PM  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 36 WELD STREET, HOKITIKA AND VIA ZOOM**

# Report to Council



**DATE:** 18 February 2026  
**TO:** Mayor and Councillors  
**FROM:** Chief Executive

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## Simplifying Local Government Submission

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to submit Westland District Council's response to the Government's Simplifying Local Government draft proposal.
- 1.2. This issue arises from the Government's public consultation on proposed changes to regional governance arrangements and the future structure of local government. The proposal has potential implications for governance, service delivery, and future structural arrangements affecting the West coast.
- 1.3. Council seeks to meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 2002 and the achievement of the District Vision adopted by the Council in June 2025, which are set out in the Long-Term Plan 2025–2034.
- 1.4. This report concludes by recommending that Council approve the submission for lodging with the Department of Internal Affairs.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The reason the report has come before the Council is due to Government releasing a draft proposal seeking feedback on reforms intended to simplify local government structures. Key elements include replacing regional councillors with Combined Territories Boards (CTBs), developing regional reorganisation plans, and reviewing regional council functions.
- 2.2 Given the potential long-term implications for governance structures, service delivery, and financial sustainability, it is important that Westland District Council provides a clear and considered response reflecting the needs and realities of a small, rural district.

### 3. Current Situation

- 3.1. The current situation is Westland District Council have prepared a draft submission informed by a public excluded Council workshop discussion, which was attended by all councillors except one who was an apology.
- 3.2. The submission supports the objective of simplifying local government while identifying areas requiring further clarity, refinement, and sequencing to ensure reforms deliver genuine benefits for small and rural councils.
- 3.3. Council approval is now required to submit the response within the consultation timeframe.

#### **4. Options**

- 4.1. Option 1: Approve the submission for lodgement
- 4.2. Option 2: Approve the submission with amendments
- 4.3. Option 3: Do not submit

#### **5. Risk Analysis**

- 5.1. Risk has been considered and the following risks have been identified
- 5.2. If Council does not submit:
  - 5.2.1. Westland District may not be represented in decisions that could significantly affect future governance arrangements.
  - 5.2.2. Opportunities to influence reform settings for rural councils may be lost.
- 5.3. If Council submits:
  - 5.3.1. There is minimal risk. Submitting ensures Council's position and regional context are formally recorded.

#### **6. Health and Safety**

- 6.1. Health and Safety has been considered, and no items have been identified.

#### **7. Significance and Engagement**

- 7.1. The level of significance has been assessed as being low to moderate.

The report seeks approval to submit a response to central government consultation. No public consultation is required. Council's submission reflects governance-level considerations rather than immediate service changes.

- 7.1.1. No public consultation is considered necessary.

#### **8. Assessment of Options (including Financial Considerations)**

- 8.1. **Option 1** – Approve the submission

- 8.1.1. Advantages

- Ensures Westland District Council's interests are represented.
- Influences reforms affecting governance, cost structures, and service delivery.
- Supports regional and rural advocacy.

- 8.1.2. Disadvantages

- None identified.

- 8.1.3. Financial implications:

- There are no financial implications.

## 8.2. **Option 2** – Approve with amendments

### 8.2.1. Advantages

- Allows refinement of Council's position.

### 8.2.2. Disadvantages

- May delay submission if significant amendments are required.

### 8.2.3. Financial implications:

- There are no financial implications.

## 8.3. **Option 3** – Do not submit

### 8.3.1. Advantages

- None

### 8.3.2. Disadvantages

- Council forfeits the opportunity to influence reform.
- Rural perspectives may be underrepresented.

### 8.3.3. Financial implications:

- There are no financial implications.

## 9. **Preferred Option(s) and Reasons**

9.1. The preferred option is Option 1: Approve the submission for lodgement.

9.2. The reason that Option 1 has been identified as the preferred option is that submitting ensures Council's views are formally considered and supports advocacy for governance arrangements that are proportionate, effective, and sustainable for small rural councils.

## 10. **Recommendation(s)**

10.1. That the report be received.

10.2. That Council approve the submission on the Government's Simplifying Local Government proposal.

10.3. That the Chief Executive be authorised to make minor editorial amendments prior to submission if required.

**Barbara Phillips**  
**Chief Executive**

<b>Do you agree there is a need to simplify local government?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strongly Agree</li></ul>
<b>What do you think of the proposed approach overall?</b>
<p>Westland District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposal to simplify local government and supports the objective of improving clarity, reducing duplication, and ensuring governance arrangements are proportionate and effective for small, rural councils.</p> <p>The Council agrees that New Zealand’s local government system would benefit from simplification. Current arrangements are complex and, for small rural councils, the governance and compliance burden is often disproportionate to the outcomes delivered.</p> <p>While the objective of simplification is supported, the Council considers that aspects of the proposed approach would benefit from further refinement. The establishment of Combined Territories Boards, alongside a separate and time-bound regional reorganisation planning process, introduces additional governance steps that may increase complexity in the short to medium term rather than reduce it.</p> <p>There is also limited detail on how Combined Territories Boards would operate in practice, including governance capacity, decision-making processes, and interaction with existing council responsibilities. Greater clarity on how mayoral workloads would be managed and how regional governance responsibilities would be supported would strengthen confidence in the model, particularly for small and rural councils managing multiple reform programmes and financial pressures.</p> <p>In this context, the Council considers that further implementation of Local Water Done Well should be carefully sequenced alongside the wider local government reform programme. The West Coast’s earlier rationale for establishing a council-controlled organisation was developed under governance assumptions that may change if reform progresses toward a more integrated or unitary model. Proceeding in advance of greater clarity risks unnecessary cost and duplication, particularly where an in-house delivery model may ultimately provide a more streamlined and proportionate outcome once the direction of local government reform is confirmed.</p>
<b>What level of Crown participation in regional decision-making do you prefer?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crown Commissioner on CTB (non-Voting)</li></ul>
<b>Do you agree with replacing regional councillors with a CTB?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neither agree nor disagree</li></ul>
<b>What do you like or dislike about the proposal to replace regional councillors with a CTB?</b>
<p>Westland District Council recognises that the proposal to replace elected regional councillors with a Combined Territories Board presents both potential benefits and areas of uncertainty and accordingly does not take a definitive position for or against the proposal at this stage.</p>

The Council acknowledges that the intent of the CTB model is to simplify regional governance arrangements, strengthen alignment between regional and district decision-making, and improve accountability through mayoral leadership. If well designed and implemented, the model may support improved regional coordination and could provide a pathway toward more integrated or unitary governance arrangements over time.

At the same time, the Council notes that replacing regional councillors with a CTB would not alter the statutory functions or responsibilities currently exercised at the regional level. Governance responsibility would instead transfer to mayors who already hold significant district leadership and governance responsibilities. This raises considerations regarding governance capacity, workload, and the practical operation of the model, particularly for small, rural councils.

While some councillors acknowledged that a CTB could, in theory, support greater regional alignment or act as a pathway toward future unitary arrangements, greater clarity is required on how the model would operate in practice before a more settled view can be formed.

**Do you agree that mayors on the CTB should have a proportional vote adjusted for effective representation?**

- Strongly disagree

**What do you like or dislike about the voting proposal for the CTB?**

Westland District Council has concerns about the proposed voting arrangements for CTBs, particularly where voting power may be weighted or adjusted through population-based formulas or discretionary determinations by the Local Government Commission.

For regions such as the West Coast, where district populations are broadly comparable, the case for proportional or adjustable voting is weak. A one mayor, one vote model is simple, transparent, and easily understood by communities, and avoids uncertainty associated with variable or centrally determined voting allocations.

The Council considers that introducing discretionary or proportional voting risks recreating governance complexity and undermining confidence in decision-making. Simple and consistent voting arrangements would better support clarity, equity between councils, and local accountability.

In relation to Crown involvement, the Council supports the presence of a non-voting Crown Commissioner in an advisory capacity only. Proposals that grant voting power, veto rights, or majority control to Crown appointees raise concerns about democratic legitimacy and local decision-making.

**What do you think about the ways that communities crossing regional boundaries could be represented?**

This aspect of the proposal is not applicable to the West Coast. Westland District is wholly contained within a single region, and there are no communities or populations that cross regional boundaries in a way that would require alternative representation arrangements. Accordingly, the Council has no specific comment on this matter.

<b>Do you support the proposal to require CTBs to Develop regional reorganisation plans?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree</li></ul>
<b>What do you think about the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans?</b>
<p>Westland District Council considers the proposed criteria for assessing regional reorganisation plans to be high-level and broadly appropriate, but notes that they are light given the scale and significance of the decisions being contemplated.</p> <p>Criteria such as strategic fit, affordability, service effectiveness, leadership, local voice, and Treaty arrangements are reasonable in principle and provide flexibility for regions to reflect local context. However, the absence of clearer thresholds, priorities, or an articulated end-state places a significant burden on councils to design solutions without sufficient certainty about the Government’s longer-term intentions.</p> <p>While the Council supports regional reorganisation plans being developed through regionally led processes rather than being imposed directly by central government, greater upfront clarity from Government would reduce the risk of substantial effort being invested in plans that are later amended or redirected through Ministerial approval.</p>
<b>What do you think about how the proposal provides for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements?</b>
<p>Westland District Council considers that the current arrangements for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty of Waitangi obligations are working well and should not be weakened or diluted through governance change.</p> <p>The proposal indicates that existing Treaty settlement commitments, statutory obligations, and engagement requirements would transfer to CTBs in the same way they are currently held by regional councils. It is critical that this continuity is preserved in practice, with no reduction in the effectiveness of engagement, influence in decision-making, or accountability.</p> <p>The Council also emphasises that responsibility for Treaty settlements and their ongoing interpretation must remain clearly with the Crown. Governance reforms should reinforce existing arrangements that are functioning well, rather than risk unintended consequences through structural change.</p>

### Closing Comment

Westland District Council supports the need to simplify local government but is not convinced that the proposed approach will deliver genuine simplification or improved outcomes. A clearer, more direct pathway, building on existing collaboration mechanisms, maintaining democratic accountability, and providing greater upfront clarity from Government, would give the Council greater confidence that reform objectives can be achieved in a way that reflects the realities of small, rural councils.