
Workshop - Council
NOTES ATTACHMENTS

Date: Thursday 11 December 2025
Time: 10.03 am
Venue: Camellia Chambers, Level 2, Civic Offices,
53 Hereford Street, Christchurch

TABLE OF CONTENTS NGĀ IHIRANGI	PAGE
4. Simplifying Local Government Reforms	
A. Presentation - Simplifying Local Government workshop 2 - 11 December 2025.....	3

Simplifying Local Government

Briefing two: Next steps

Briefing purpose & agenda

Purpose: to share our current understanding of the reform, present our proposed submission process, and seek Council input before we proceed to the next stage.



What we will cover:

1. General update
2. Submission process for our response to the Government's reform proposal
3. Discussion

General Update

Submission Approach

Simplifying Local Government proposal recap

Proposal recap

- Replace regional councillors with a Combined Territories Board (CTB) made up of mayors, holding all current regional council functions.
- The CTB will be responsible for governance of regional council functions.
- The CTB must develop a Regional Reorganisation Plan within two years of establishment, setting out its preferred long-term governance model.
- Regions may recommend shared services, new delivery vehicles, amalgamation, or unitary models – but only through the reorganisation plan process.

Advice recap

- The CTB is a temporary coordination forum, not a durable governance model.
- High risk the plan becomes a negotiated compromise, not a long-term solution.
- Transitional design may limit Christchurch's ability to put forward metropolitan-scale options.
- The proposal does not reflect the needs of NZ's second-largest city, nor our infrastructure and climate challenges.
- Also raises significant uncertainty around Treaty representation and Māori partnership arrangements.

Submission approach

Our Approach

Christchurch supports the intent of simplification and functional review, but we have practical concerns about how the process will operate and how regional plans will be developed.

Why We Are Providing Feedback

- The Government's proposal sets a high-level direction for reform, but the details of the process, governance mechanisms, and expectations for regions still require clarification.

Our Focus

- Our submission will respond to the process, not the structural outcomes.
- We want to ensure the reform enables a credible, evidence-based regional review – with the right support, flexibility, and governance settings in place.

Acknowledging the intent of the Government's approach

We share the goal of designing a system that works better for communities and the region

A functional review is useful and necessary

- A systematic review of regional functions is a sensible first step.
- It provides a methodical way to map what services are delivered, by whom, and how effectively.
- This creates a shared evidence base for future decisions.
- On paper, this approach can help reduce duplication, improve alignment, and clarify responsibilities.

Christchurch supports the intent

- We agree Canterbury needs a more integrated, efficient, and future-focused system.
- We are ready to participate constructively and bring strong leadership to the process.

CTB representation must be fit for purpose

The CTB must support a genuine functional review, not pre-determine outcomes through rigid representation.

The CTB structure, as proposed, risks constraining effective decision-making

- A single, region-wide table may not reflect the very different needs of metropolitan and rural communities.
- Equal representation by TA risks under-weighting Christchurch's scale (population, infrastructure, economic activity).
- Without clear voting rules or proportionality, metropolitan priorities could be diluted or delayed.

Sub-regional flexibility is essential

- The CTB must be able to form sub-groups or working clusters (e.g., Greater Christchurch) for issues that naturally operate at metropolitan scale.
- Many core functions, transport, land use, growth, climate adaptation, require decisions across the regional level.
- Flexible structures allow the CTB to reflect how the system actually works, not how boundaries were historically drawn.

The *Regional Reorganisation Plan* must be a true functional review

It must be a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of what functions the region needs and how best to deliver them

- The RRP must start with functions, services, and outcomes, not pre-determined structural assumptions.
- It needs the flexibility to identify different solutions for different functions, rather than forcing a single “one-size-fits-all” model across the whole region.
- A suite of structural options may be required (e.g., metropolitan, regional, shared-service, or delegated functions), depending on what delivers the strongest performance.
- The review must be evidence-led, not negotiation-led, with decisions grounded in cost, capability, service quality, resilience, and community outcomes.
- Christchurch expects the process to enable multiple viable pathways, allowing the Government to choose the model, or set of models, that genuinely works for Canterbury.

Momentum matters: we cannot wait until 2027

Canterbury needs progress now. We must be enabled to begin the work immediately, not lose three years to process

The proposed timeframe is too long

- The CTB is not scheduled to be in place until 2027, with the Regional Reorganisation Plan due up to two years after that.
- Waiting for the formal structure would stall momentum at a time when Canterbury's challenges require urgent, coordinated action.

Christchurch needs, and expects, early progress

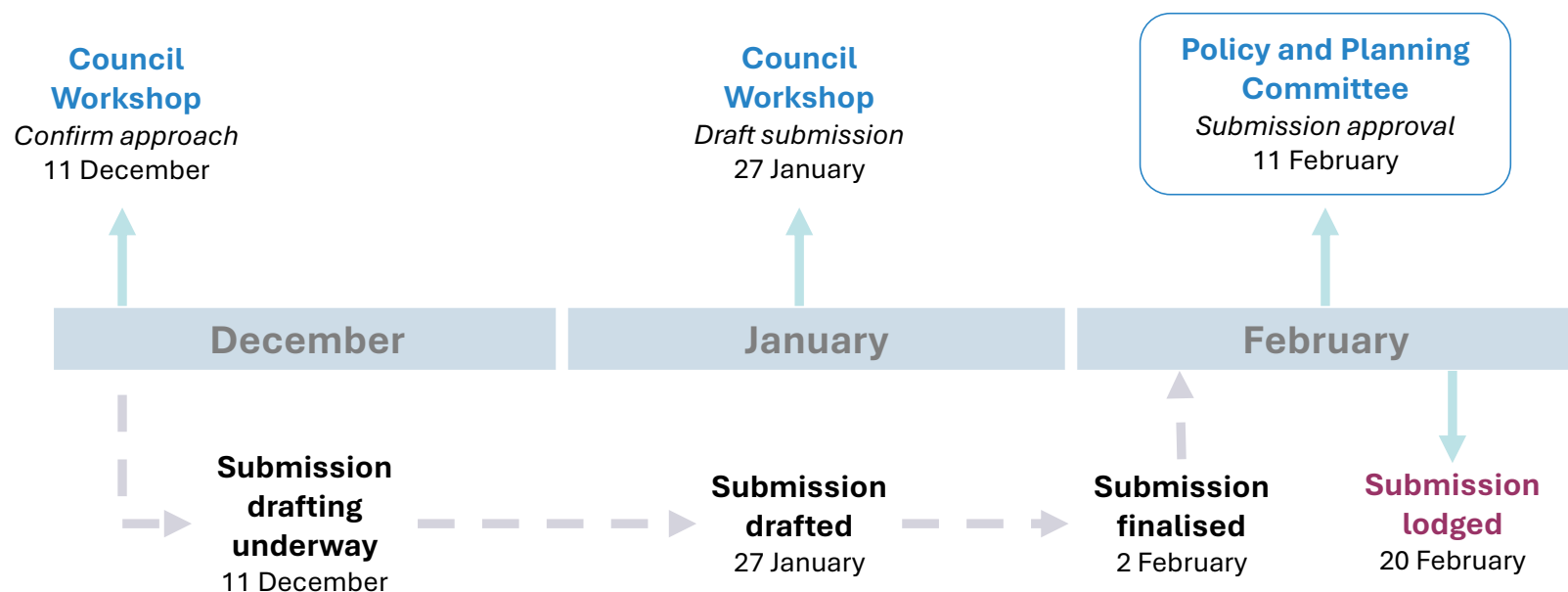
- Councils must be empowered to start functional analysis, data-sharing, and sub-regional planning now, not after transitional machinery is established.
- Early progress reduces transition risk, improves evidence quality, and ensures the region is not forced into rushed decisions late in the process.
- Canterbury cannot afford a multi-year pause. We need clarity, direction, and active planning from the outset.

Additional considerations we could raise

To ensure a credible process, we will emphasise:

- The importance of full transparency about data, cost structures, and capability across all councils.
- The need for mana whenua partnership from the outset, not as an add-on to CTB decision-making.
- Ensuring the process avoids political compromise and remains focused on long-term outcomes.
- Clarity about funding and cost-sharing principles, especially for regionally significant functions.
- The need to avoid function transfers without funding, which would undermine any future model.
- The importance of maintaining community representation and identity during any transition.
- Ensuring flexibility for bespoke arrangements, not one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Avoiding “default to status quo” outcomes due to lack of early testing or leadership.

Submission process and timelines



Early and ongoing engagement with Selwyn, Waimakariri and mana whenua is important

Strong early engagement positions Christchurch as a constructive partner in shaping regional solutions, without pre-determining outcomes or commitments

- Mana whenua involvement is essential from the start to help identify risks, priorities and outcomes to inform the design of future service and governance options.
- We need shared understanding of how services currently operate, including functions, costs, capability, pressures, and future demand across Christchurch, Selwyn and Waimakariri.
- Neighbouring councils' insights are critical to test how functions could be delivered differently, where efficiencies exist, and where local impacts would be felt.
- The functional review will only be credible if it reflects real operational realities across the region, not assumptions made in isolation.
- Engagement helps identify risks, opportunities, and constraints early so that any proposed structures or pathways are workable, evidence-based, and future-focused.

Discussion
