
Policy and Planning Committee
MINUTES ATTACHMENTS

Date: Wednesday 11 February 2026
Time: 9:31 am
Venue: Camellia Chambers, Civic Offices,
53 Hereford Street, Christchurch

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Simplifying Local Government reform

Consideration and approval of Christchurch
City Council's submission

Purpose

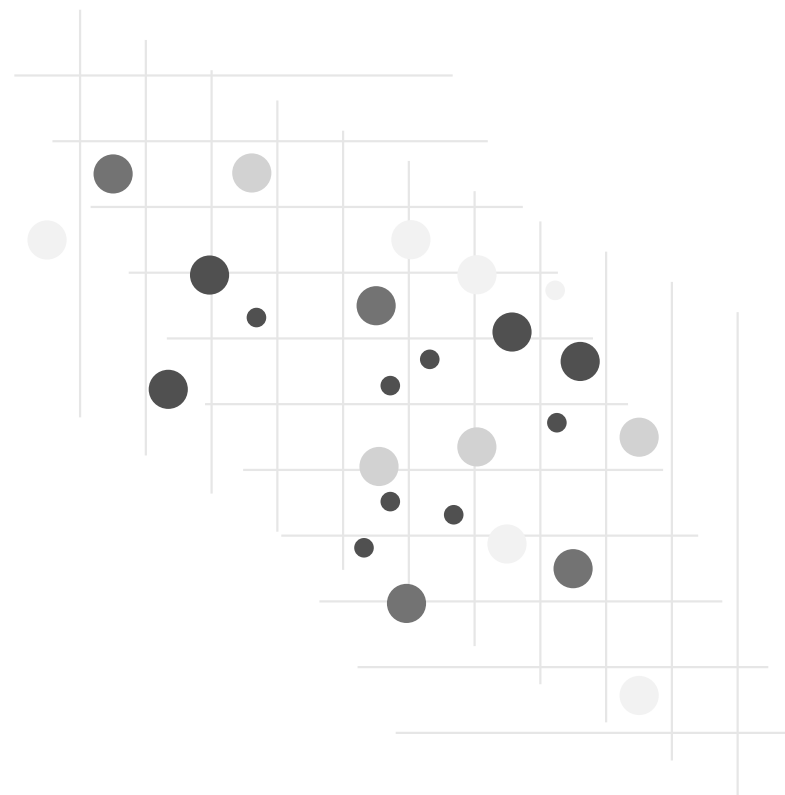
Purpose: To seek the Policy and Planning Committee's consideration and approval of Christchurch City Council's draft submission on the Government's Simplifying Local Government reform proposal.



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.



Submission Overview

Why is this important?

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and risk, for Christchurch...

... We need to engage seriously to shape a process that delivers outcomes that match the scale and responsibility of a major city.

- This reform will reset how key functions are governed and delivered across Canterbury for decades.
- Decisions made now will shape growth, infrastructure investment, climate resilience, and service performance long into the future.
- Christchurch carries the largest population, infrastructure load, and risk exposure in the region... outcomes that don't work for us won't work for Canterbury.
- There is a real risk of one-size-fits-all or negotiated compromise outcomes unless the process is strong and evidence-led.

Summary of our position

We support the outcomes the reform is seeking to achieve, but we are not convinced the CTB model, as proposed, will deliver them for Canterbury.

The CTB is expected to govern existing regional functions while leading a once-in-a-generation system redesign... a combination that risks diluted focus and constrained capacity.

The scope and role of the CTB alongside resource management reform remains unclear, creating additional delivery risk during transition.

The Council is asking the Government to reconsider the CTB's design and composition, including whether reform leadership should be separated from ongoing regional governance.

Transitional arrangements should enable metropolitan-scale analysis and differentiated solutions, reflecting how systems actually operate across greater Christchurch.

Ultimately, the Council's focus is on ensuring the reform is supported by governance, capability, and analytical arrangements that enable a rigorous, independent functional review.

What we like

We support the intent of simplification and functional review...

We like:

- Simplifying local government and reducing duplication
- Improving long-term performance, resilience, and value for money
- A functional review first (“function first, form second”)
- Stronger collaboration where it improves outcomes

... but we have practical concerns about how the process will operate and how regional plans will be developed.

What we're concerned with

CTB capacity risk:

One body expected to govern existing regional functions *and* lead major system redesign.

Negotiated outcomes:

Risk the RRP becomes consensus-driven rather than evidence-led.

Metropolitan dilution:

Voting and representation settings may underweight Christchurch's scale, infrastructure load, and risk.

One-size-fits-all approach:

Region-wide solutions could mask real performance issues where systems already operate at metro scale.

Secretariat independence:

Perceived or actual institutional bias would undermine trust in the process.

Cost and risk transfer:

Risk of unfunded mandates or unjustified cross-subsidisation onto Christchurch ratepayers.

Long timelines:

Delays risk loss of momentum and rushed decisions later.

Representation reviews

Concurrent representation reviews risk duplication, confusion, unnecessary cost, and misaligned decisions.

What we want to see

A true functional review:

Function first, form second assessment of what works before deciding structure.

Metro sub-grouping enabled:

Explicit provision for metropolitan workstreams alongside region-wide analysis.

Evidence-led options:

Ability to test multiple models, including metropolitan and unitary options where evidence supports them.

Strong governance settings:

Clear delegation, decision rules, and voting that reflect scale and impact.

Independent secretariat:

Neutral, analytically strong, and not led or owned by any single institution.

Treaty partnership embedded:

Mana whenua involvement from the outset, with existing arrangements protected.

Transparency on cost:

Funding follows function, clear transition costs, and affordability for Christchurch ratepayers.

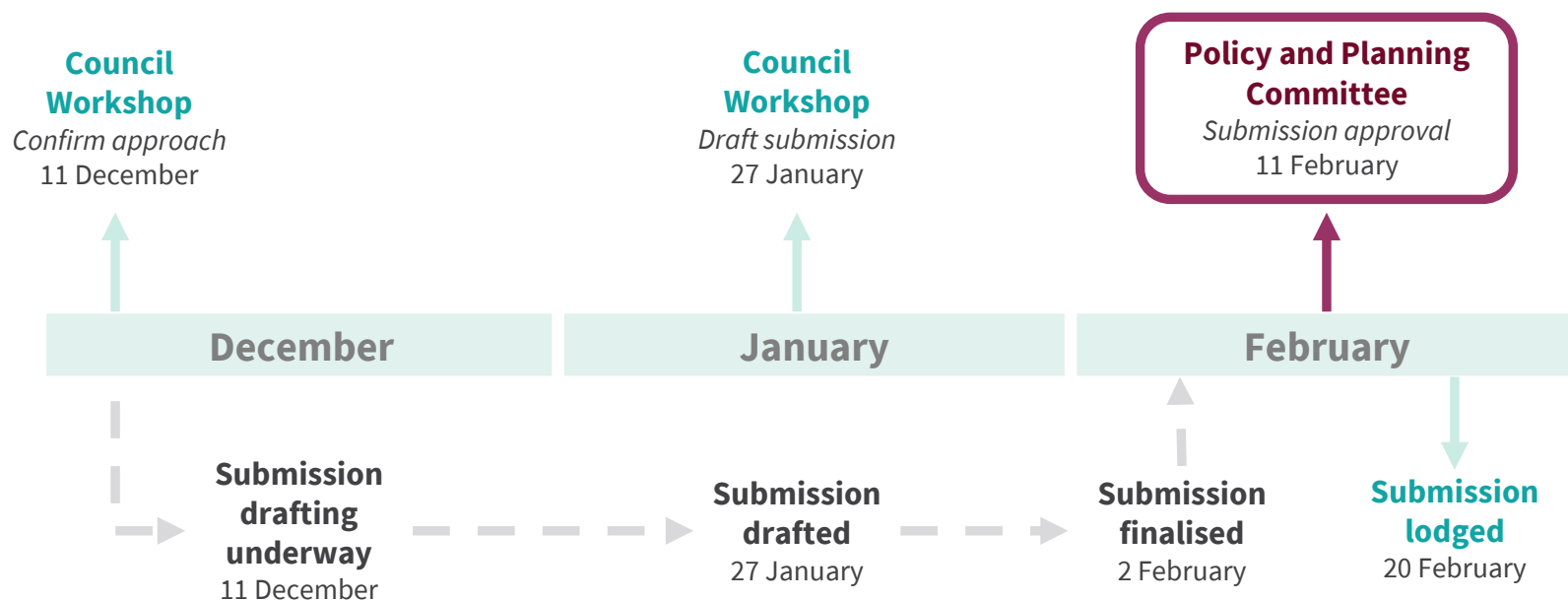
Early momentum:

Ability to start functional analysis now, not wait years for process.

Defer representation reviews:

Enable amendments to the Local Electoral Act allowing territorial authorities to pause representation reviews during the reform period.

Next steps



Discussion
