

Workshop - Council
NOTES ATTACHMENTS

Date: Tuesday 2 June 2026
Time: 10.03 am
Venue: Camellia Chambers, Civic Offices,
53 Hereford Street, Christchurch

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Local Government Reorganisation

Head Start Pathway

Council workshop 2 June 2026

Head Start announcement: 5 May 2026

WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED

Government opens a voluntary three-month Head Start window

Councils have until 9 August 2026 to submit outline proposals for local government reorganisation. Aim is for unitary authorities.

Earlier CTB / Regional Reorganisation Plan model is replaced

The *Simplifying Local Government* proposal announced in November 2025 has been superseded. This is the new process.

Proposals must come from two or more territorial authorities

Must represent a majority of councils or population in the affected area. Regional councils cannot submit.

Assessment criteria

Outline Proposals will be assessed on: deliverability, supports the new planning system, simplifies local governance, economies of scale, maintains local voice.

Must also address: need to consolidate transport functions; interim arrangements regarding new planning system; river catchment management.

Compulsory backstop process for councils that do not reform via the Head Start process

Come 2028 elections, an interim body (TBD) will be put in place to govern and reorganise.

Regional councillors will be retained only until the next elections

In 2028, there will be no elections for regional councillors.

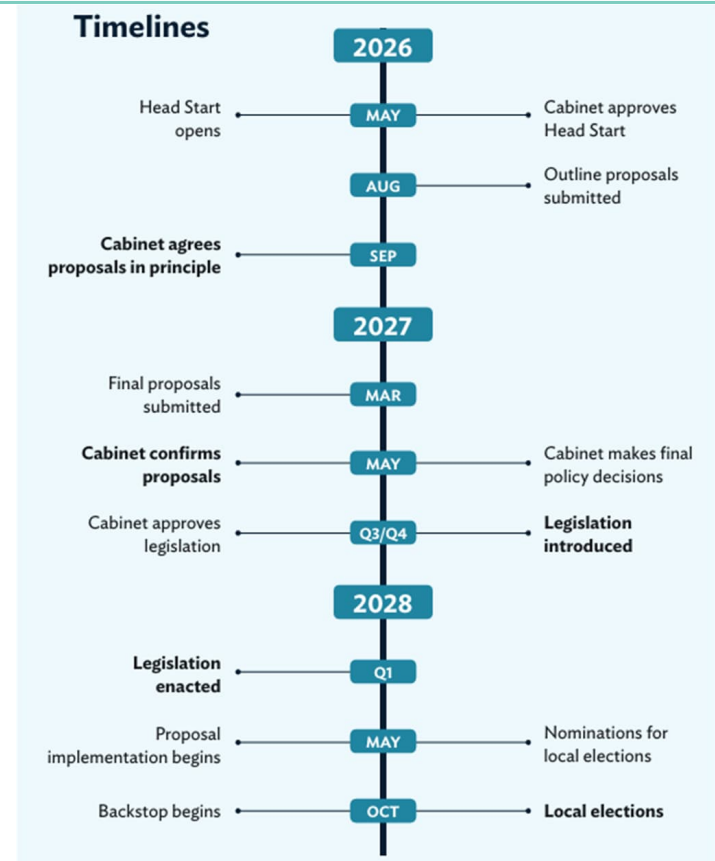
THE MESSAGE FROM MINISTERS

"Lead your own reform, or we will do it for you. Either way, change is coming."

Head Start process and timeframes

KEY DATES

| | |
|------------|---|
| 5 May 2026 | Head Start Announcement; Proposal window open. |
| 9 Aug 2026 | Outline Proposals due; 3-month deadline |
| Sept 2026 | Cabinet agree which proposals to progress; Detailed design of chosen reform begins |
| Mar 2027 | Final proposals submitted to government |
| May 2027 | Cabinet confirms proposals and final policy decisions (e.g. the backstop process) |
| Q3/Q4 2027 | Legislation introduced giving effect to reforms (specific proposals and backstop process) |
| 2028 | Implementation before local elections |
| Oct 2028 | Local Elections; No regional councillor elections; Backstop process begins. |



Shape the reform or have it shaped for us

The key choice for the region is whether we shape our own proposal or have one shaped for us



ENGAGE EARLY (HEAD START)

A voluntary pathway to put forward an outline proposal by 9 August 2026, a direction of travel, not a finished design.

If accepted, the detail is worked through in 2027, ahead of the 2028 elections.

It keeps a seat at the table for the things that matter to our communities.



STEP BACK (BACKSTOP)

If we don't engage, a compulsory process settles the design of the reform after the 2028 elections.

The same outcome still arrives, but with less local say over how it is shaped.

The risk is that the region inherits a structure designed without our input.

Reform is happening and a direction has been set

The Government's goal is to establish unitary authorities.



What the Government has said

Councils should join to become larger unitary authorities, typically covering whole regions.

Some flexibility where geography and complexity make a single council impractical, as in Waitaha Canterbury.

Waitaha Canterbury will have no more than three unitary authorities. The current ten territorial authorities and ECan will not continue as they are.

Regional councillors will not be re-elected after October 2028.

What a unitary council is

A unitary council does both jobs in one organisation... the work our city council does now, plus the work the regional council (ECan) does.

One unitary council

Both sets of responsibilities, delivered by a single organisation.

The regional council's functions don't disappear, they transfer in.

This is the model the Government wants and there are several existing examples in New Zealand currently.



City / district council

Roads, water, rubbish collection, community facilities, local services etc.

Regional council (ECan)

Environment, flood control, public transport etc.

We want to take part in Head Start



Working in partnership

Reform is happening and we want to engage constructively with regional and Te Tiriti partners to develop credible proposals.



Best outcome for the region

Working together across Waitaha Canterbury will get a better result than going it alone or having it imposed.



Shaping, not waiting

Engaging now as a region lets us influence the detail while there is still room to do so.

What's decided, what we resolve now, what comes later



DIRECTION SET BY GOVERNMENT The intent is for one unitary authority per region. No more than three unitary councils for all of Canterbury.

THE OUTLINE PROPOSAL

What goes in the outline proposal

- Which councils come together to form each unitary. This is the core question.
- Outlining how the proposal can create a functioning unitary council that can absorb regional functions.
- How existing Treaty settlement arrangements carry across.

DETAILED DESIGN

What we need to consider, but can resolve later

- Governance & representation: how it is led, how communities are represented.
- Functions: what is central, what is local.
- Transition: how change is managed.

What goes in the outline proposal

The August proposal doesn't need to resolve everything, but it does need to answer three things clearly.

1: Which councils are coming together

Needs to show a grouping that reflects genuine community of interest, is large enough to deliver the full range of council services, and has the agreement of the councils involved.

2: That a credible unitary can be established.

Needs to demonstrate that this isn't just councils joining up. It's a new organisation that takes on everything a regional council currently does.

The effective delivery of regional functions must be clearly demonstrated.

The proposal doesn't need to resolve every detail of how these transfer, but it must show they've been accounted for.

3: Te Tiriti settlement arrangements.

The proposal must show how existing Treaty settlement arrangements carry across to the new unitary with equivalent effect.



The proposal will also be assessed against five criteria:

Deliverability

The proposal is realistic and can be implemented in time for the 2028 elections

Supports the new planning system

Spatial plans and natural environment plans keep moving, no disruption

Simplifies local governance

Fewer councils, less duplication, clearer decision-making

Economies of scale

Better delivery of regional functions

Maintains local voice

Communities are still fairly represented, with urban and rural interests balanced

The outline doesn't need to satisfy these in full, but it needs to show enough that Government is confident the proposal is worth taking to the next stage.

What is worked through in detailed design

These are important areas but will be addressed in detailed design. They shouldn't hold back a confident outline proposal now.



Functions: what sits where

- What's organised at the unitary scale, where coordination matters.
- Evidence that regional functions can be delivered in their most effective way.
- What stays close to communities, where responsiveness matters.
- How it's delivered. In-house, or CCOs where they add value.



Governance & representation

- How the council is led. Elected mayor, or a chair elected by councillors, or other.
- How communities are represented, and how local voice and identity is protected.
- How strong the local layer is. From light-touch boards to bodies with real power and budgets.



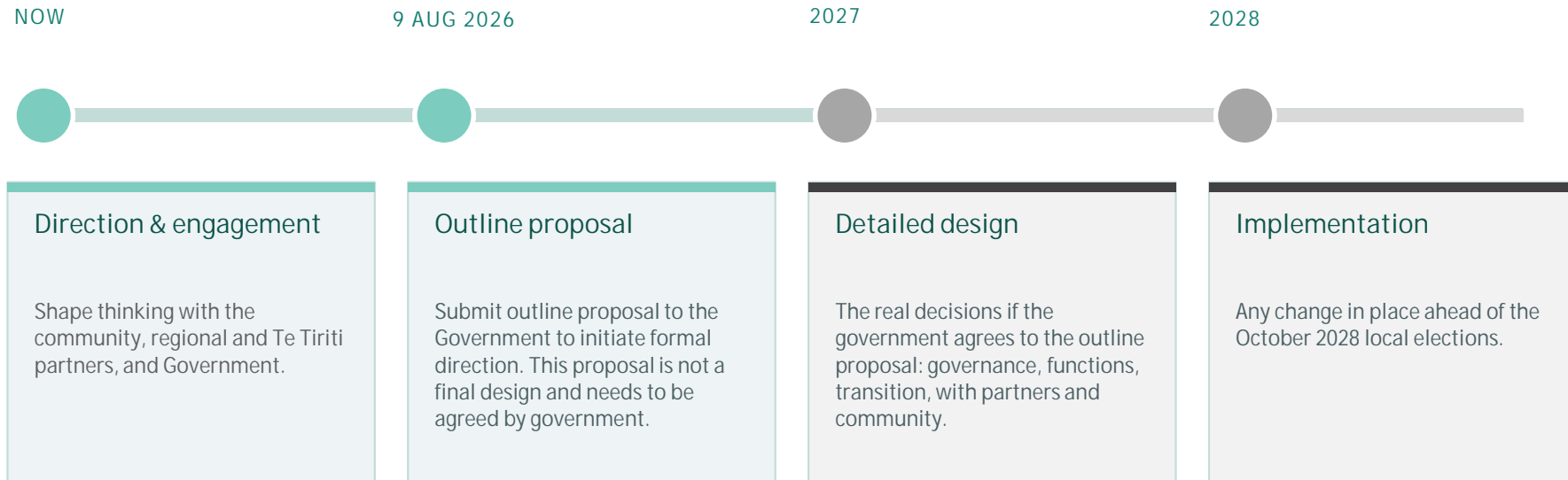
Transition: managing change

- Financial transition. How rates and debt are rationalised over time.
- People, systems and data brought together carefully.
- Legal and regulatory continuity. Bylaws, consents and contracts carried across without gaps.



UNDERNEATH IT ALL Community engagement to inform the outcomes we expect to see in the detailed design.

An outline proposal is just the start of the Head Start process



Key takeaway

Reform is happening. We will become a Unitary Authority.

- We want to engage and collaborate across the region and put a proposal forward.
- Working together with our regional and Te Tiriti partners will get the best outcome for our communities.
- There is flexibility in how Waitaha Canterbury can be organised.
- A strong model will support local identity and voice while building the regional capability our communities need.
- No decisions have been made, but we need to move from conversation to direction quickly before August.
- If it is in our community's best interest to submit options for central government to consider in the Backstop process, we will.

Ōtautahi Christchurch is ready to work constructively with the region to put forward credible options

Quarterly Governance Update – Q3 2025/2026 (January – March 2026)

Presenters:

- Sean Rainey, Manager Official Information
- Matt Bould, Team Leader Governance Process

Key Metrics Comparison

| Metric | Q3 2024/2025 | Q3 2025/2026 | Change (%) | YTD (Target) |
|---|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Number of meetings held | 86 | 86 | No change | 250 (500 – 650) |
| Number of reports and memos considered | 577 | 546 | ▼ - 5% | 1682 |
| % of eligible meetings were livestreamed | 92% | 100% | ▲ 8% | 100% (100%) |
| % of Voting records for the term published online | N/A | 100% | New measure | 100% (100%) |
| Meetings compliant with legislation & process standards | 96% | 100% | ▲ 4% | 100% (100%) |
| % of overall reports in Public Excluded (PX) | 7.4% | 8.2% | ▲ 1.8% | 9% (6.5%) |
| Total % of 2025 – 2028 PX Reports reviewed for release as of this quarter | 79% | 63% | ▼ - 16% | 71% (85%) |
| New meeting actions generated from meetings | 167 | 157 | ▼ - 6% | 588 |
| Meeting actions closed | 546 | 209 | ▼ - 61% | 655 |
| % of meeting actions closed late | 21% | 23% | ▲ 2% | 14% |
| % Ombudsman requests are compliant | 100% | 100% | No change | 100% |
| % LGOIMA requests are compliant | ca. 99% | 98.3% | ▼ -0.7% | 99.9% |

Information Sessions/Workshops in Open

Q3 2025 – 2026 Items Considered in Informal Meetings

| Type | Total | Open | PX | % Open |
|------------------|-------|------|----|--------|
| Council | 47 | 25 | 22 | 53% |
| Community Boards | 50 | 49 | 1 | 98% |
| Total | 97 | 74 | 23 | 76% |

YTD 2024 – 2025 Items Considered in Informal Meetings

| Type | Total | Open | PX | % Open |
|------------------|-------|------|----|--------|
| Council | 126 | 82 | 47 | 65% |
| Community Boards | 95 | 92 | 3 | 97% |
| Total | 221 | 175 | 50 | 79% |

For context:

- In Q3 2022/23, 30% of informal items were considered in open (before the open sessions by default)
- In Q3 2023/24, 87% of informal items were considered in open

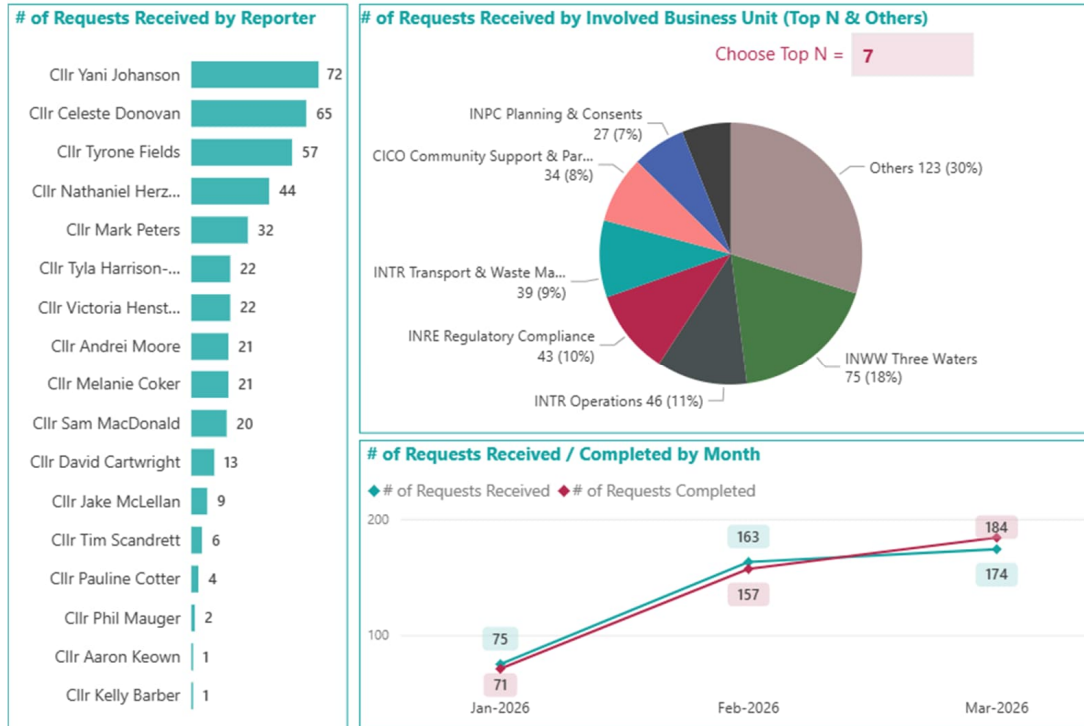
Voting in Meetings

Key Metrics (including PX voting):

| Total individual votes in period | Q3 – 3011 | YTD - 5417 |
|--|------------|------------|
| Votes "For" | 2622 (87%) | 4754 (89%) |
| Votes "Against" | 92 (3%) | 222 (5%) |
| Individual vote absences | 259 (9%) | 350 (4%) |
| Individual abstentions | 10 (0.3%) | 38 (1%) |
| Declared conflicts of interest | 28 (0.7%) | 53 (1%) |
| Number of voting motions passed | 287 | 521 |
| Number of voting motions passed | 285 (99%) | 512 (98%) |
| Number of voting motions lost | 2 (1%) | 9 (2%) |

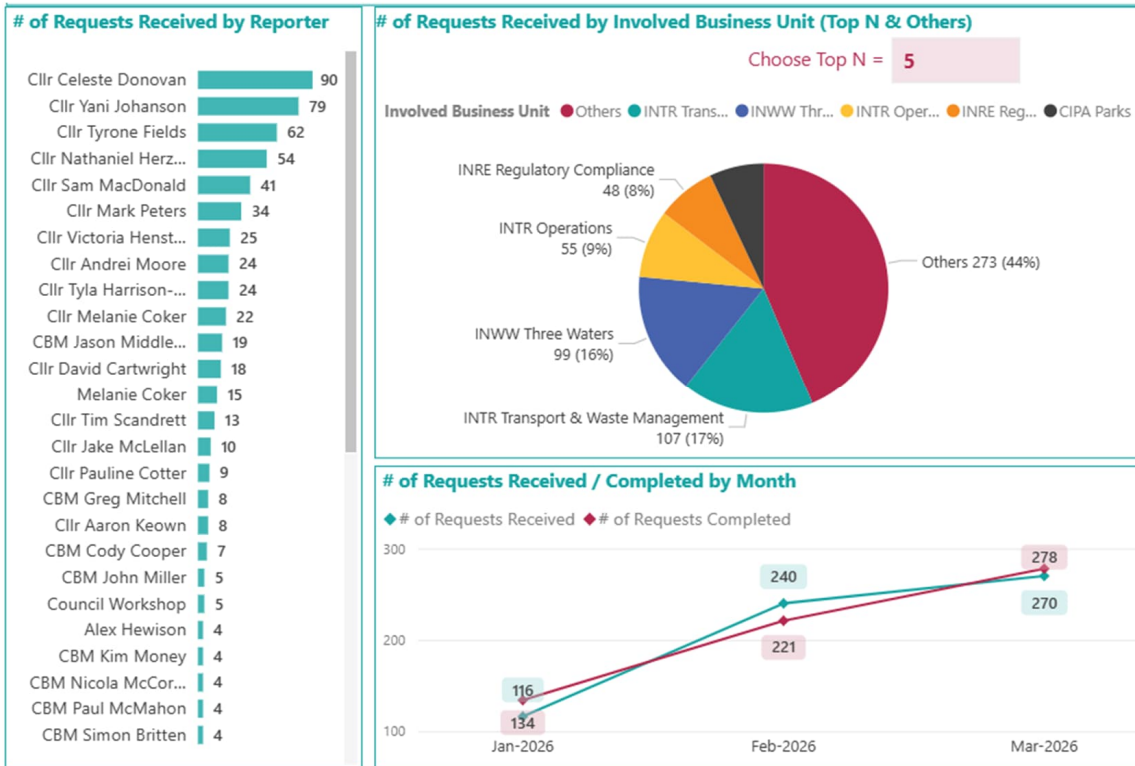
Voting records for the term online at [Meeting voting records: Christchurch City Council](#)

Councillor Requests Q3 2025 - 2026



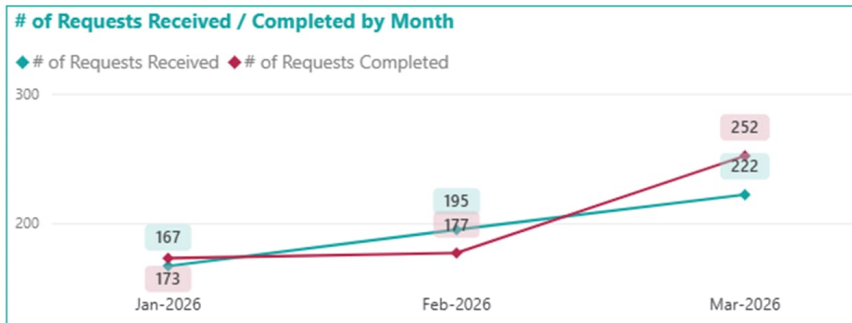
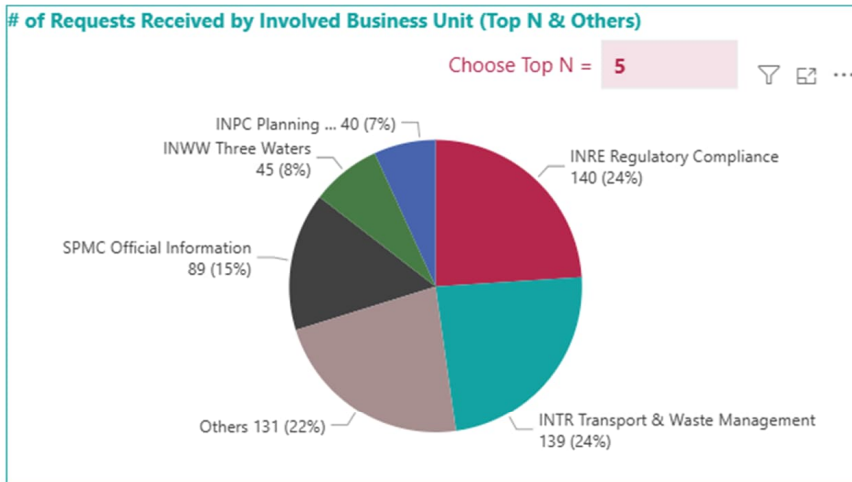
- 412 requests received
- 412 requests completed
- 7 Units respond to around 70 per cent of requests
- Requests often include multiple questions

Community Board Requests Q3 2025 - 2026



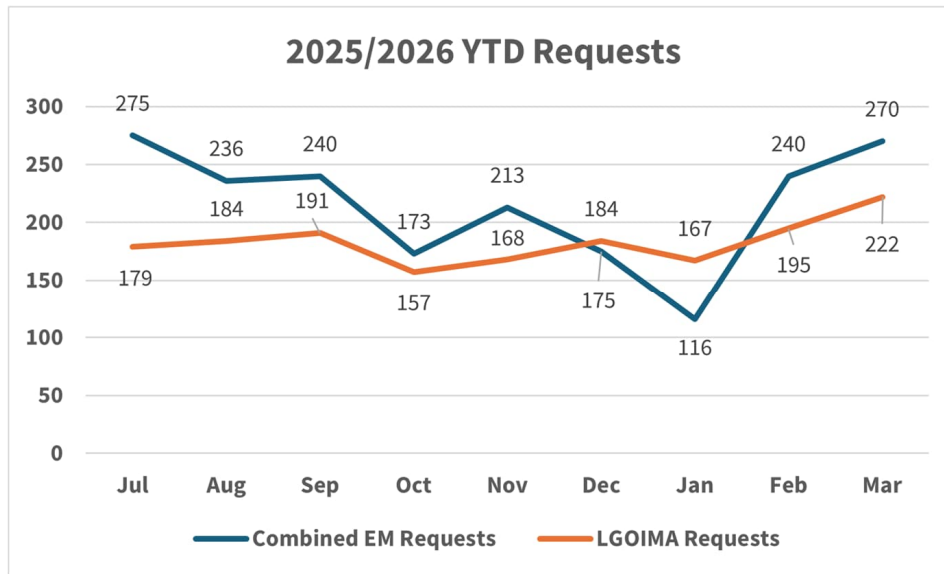
- 207 requests received
- 215 requests completed
- 4 Units respond to around 61 per cent of requests
- Requests often include multiple questions

LGOIMA Requests Q3 2025 - 2026



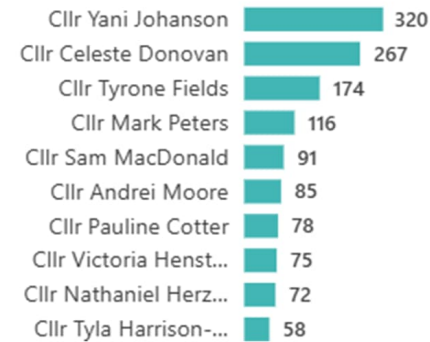
- 584 requests received (YTD-1627 requests)
- 602 requests completed
- 6 Units respond to around 78 per cent of requests
- 8.8 average completion days (YTD – 7.3 days)
- No adverse Ombudsman opinions
- One late response

LGOIMA and Elected Member requests 2025 – 2026 (YTD)



- The top 10 elected members making requests were:

of Requests Received by Reporter



LGOIMA

- 1647 LGOIMA requests received (average of 183 per month)

Elected Member Requests

- 1938 elected member requests received (average of 215 requests per month)