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## Christchurch City Council submission on DZ 9202:2025 Local Government Standing Orders

### Introduction

1. Christchurch City Council (the Council) thanks Standards New Zealand for the opportunity to provide comment on DZ 9202:2025 *Local Government Standing Orders* (LGSO).
2. The Council appreciates the opportunity to be represented on the P9202 Committee responsible for preparing the proposed LGSO. We acknowledge the challenge undertaken by the Committee to produce a fundamental governance document intended for all local authorities and its considerable effort in producing a draft set of standing orders fit for consultation within a constrained timeframe.
3. However, as outlined in the Council's submission on the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill<sup>1</sup>, concerns remain regarding the suitability of standardised standing orders for all councils. Standing orders are a foundational tool for enabling democratic decision-making and should be responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of individual communities and their elected members.
4. Overall, the Council sees improvement in the draft LGSO, which provides a more intuitive framework for application, clarifies provisions around meeting and debate processes, and helps ensure our communities and elected members can easily and effectively partake in democratic decision-making.
5. The Council has included a table of recommended wording changes (Appendix 1) as an attachment to this submission. Where this submission notes concerns with particular provisions, the table suggests alterations or additions to address those concerns.

### Submission

#### *Format and Useability*

6. The Council supports the ordering of the LGSO to reflect the typical flow of a meeting, as this enhances both usability and intuitive navigation. The use of cross-references is also welcomed, as these reduce repetition and promote the consistent application of standing orders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ccc.govt.nz/assets/Documents/The-Council/Request-information/2025/Local-Government-System-Improvements-Amendment-Bill-2025.PDF>

7. While the Council appreciates the increased use of section headings and subsections, the current Table of Contents does not include these subsections. This limits the document's navigability and undermines the benefits of the improved structure.
8. Additionally, the document's formatting could be significantly improved. The lack of clearly identifiable headings and insufficient use of white space makes it difficult for users to locate specific provisions quickly, detracting from overall readability and accessibility.
9. The Council recommends that the Table of Contents be expanded to include all subsections to support efficient navigation. Furthermore, the formatting should be modified to ensure consistent use of headings and adequate white space, thereby enhancing readability and ease of use for elected members, staff, and the public.
10. The Council further recommends the inclusion of dual language headings in both English and Te Reo Māori. Te Reo Māori is an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand and should be reflected in the LGSO. This aligns with many councils that are using dual language headings in their reports, policies, and strategies.

### **Principles and Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

11. The Council notes with concern that the proposed LGSO omit a principles section, which has been a longstanding section in standing orders and serves an important function in providing a contextual framework and guiding interpretation.
12. The Council recommends that the LGSO include a set of principles that clearly articulate the core standards by which good governance is achieved such as transparency, accountability, inclusivity, confidentiality, and legislative compliance.
13. The Council notes the exclusion of any reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Treaty Principles, or Māori participation in decision-making from the proposed LGSO. This is inconsistent with the statutory obligation under Section 14(1)(d) of the Local Government Act 2002, which requires local authorities to *'provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes'*. This was an issue that the Council identified as needing to be addressed in the review of its current standing orders.
14. The Council, therefore, recommends acknowledging and making provision for reflecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi and councils' relevant statutory obligations in the proposed LGSO and decision-making processes.

### **Mandatory requirements**

15. The Council recommends that the LGSO use consistent and unambiguous language to indicate mandatory requirements. The current use of *"must"* versus *"shall"* to distinguish between legislative and LGSO mandates creates unnecessary complexity with little purpose and may lead to confusion in interpretation and application.
16. To enhance clarity and usability, the Council recommends that the LGSO consistently use *"must"* to indicate all mandatory provisions. Where the requirement is based in legislation, this is clearly indicated through the citation of the relevant statutory provision. This approach aligns with best

practice in legislative drafting and ensures that users can easily distinguish between mandatory and discretionary provisions without ambiguity.

### *Adoption and amendment of standing orders*

17. The Council notes that the proposed LGSO contradict the proposed Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill (the Bill) in relation to the obligation to adopt standing orders and the process for adoption and alteration of standing orders.
18. Specifically, the Bill proposes that in relation to the Local Government Act 2002, Schedule 7:
  - a. clause 27(1) requiring local authorities to adopt a set of standing orders be replaced by the following:

The Secretary may approve and issue a set of standing orders for the conduct of the local authority's meetings and those of its committees.
  - b. clause 27(3) setting out the process for amending or adopting a new set of standing orders be repealed.
19. The Council recommends that the LGSO be aligned with the Bill as enacted. If the Bill's proposed changes to Schedule 7 clause 27 are enacted, it should be clarified that the ability to amend standing orders by a vote of not less than 75% of the members present relates to the discretionary provisions only.

### *Discretionary provisions*

20. As noted above, the Council has concerns regarding the suitability of standardised standing orders for all councils. However, should these be mandated, the Council strongly supports the inclusion of discretionary provisions that allow local authorities to adopt procedures tailored to their operational needs. In particular, the Council welcomes the flexibility to determine:
  - General procedures for speaking and moving motions and amendments
  - The use of a casting vote
  - Time limits for debate, public forum, deputations, petitions, and submissions.
21. These provisions recognise the diversity of local government contexts and support effective meeting management.
22. However, the Council notes that the proposed LGSO prescribe fixed limits on meeting duration — specifically, that meetings may not continue for more than two hours without a 10-minute break, or more than six hours in total, unless resolved otherwise. For larger councils, this will necessitate repeated procedural resolutions, which is inefficient and disruptive.
23. The Council recommends that the discretionary provisions be expanded to include the ability for local authorities to set their own meeting duration. This would enable councils to establish timeframes that reflect the scale of their operations, the volume of business, and the needs of their communities, while still ensuring appropriate breaks and procedural safeguards.

## Section 5 – Meeting agenda

24. The Council supports the clear delineation of responsibility for agenda management, with the chief executive holding responsibility prior to the meeting and the chairperson assuming control once the meeting commences. This clarity enhances accountability and operational efficiency.
25. The Council also welcomes the clear process for raising items for decision, and supports the discretion given to chief executives to consider broader organisational impacts when responding to requests for reports. This ensures that decisions are made with consideration of operational demands and strategic priorities.

## Section 6 – Public access and recording

26. The Council supports the clear distinction between public forums and deputations, which helps members of the public understand the appropriate channels for engagement. We also endorse the inclusion of criteria requiring that matters raised fall within the local authority's jurisdiction and the decision-making body's terms of reference. This promotes relevance and procedural clarity and will help ensure members of the public are directed to the appropriate decision-making body when requesting to speak.
27. The Council values the chairperson's discretion in managing public participation requests, recognising its importance in ensuring meetings are conducted efficiently and equitably. However, we are concerned that the current drafting could be interpreted as applying participation restrictions only to public forums. The Council considers that these restrictions should apply to both public forums and deputations, with any differences clearly signalled in the wording of each specific restriction to avoid confusion and ensure consistent application.
28. It is of further concern that the proposed LGSO appear to remove the ability for a decision-making body to request a report in response to an issue raised during a public forum. This significantly limits the potential for meaningful public engagement and undermines the role of public forums as a mechanism for raising matters of community concern.
29. The Council recommends that it be explicitly stated that a meeting may resolve to request a report in relation to a public forum item.
30. The Council does support the updated provisions relating to petitions and the section on hearing submissions, which improve transparency for submitters and better reflect current practice.

## Section 7 – Quorum requirements

31. The Council recommends that the title of this section is changed to say *quorum and attendance* requirements, particularly as it also covers attendance by electronic link.
32. The Council notes that the provisions regarding elected member attendance via electronic link have been updated to align with the legislative changes which permit attendance by electronic link to count towards quorum. Notwithstanding this flexibility, the Council acknowledges that in-person attendance at meetings is a core aspect of good governance and appreciates the clear guidance to elected members outlined in this section.

## Section 9 – Debate

33. The Council strongly agrees with the updated provisions in this section related to questions of staff (9.1.3) and moving into debate (9.1.4). These sections provide much needed clarity for elected members, staff and members of the public regarding the progression of an item once tabled for consideration. The Council appreciates the clear delineation between questions of staff and debate as a means of ensuring good process and deliberative decision-making.
34. The Council is concerned that the wording of section 9.11.1 – *Options for speaking and moving*, is confusing and appears inconsistent with the intended discretion for councils to adopt the procedure for speaking and moving motions and amendments that best suits their needs. It appears contradictory that a council could resolve, by simple majority, to use a debate option that differs from the one it adopts in accordance with section 2.1.1 by a 75 per cent vote.
35. The Council recommends removing this language as it establishes an inconsistent process which does not support transparency or uniformity across meetings, or even across individual items. Councils have other tools under standing orders that can be employed if their debate procedure needs to be adjusted to accommodate the business of the meeting.
36. The Council supports the clarity in section 9.11.3.1 regarding moving and seconding motions and amendments at any time once an item is tabled for consideration. This aligns with common practice in meetings and sets clear expectations for elected members, staff, and the public.
37. The Council also supports the updated wording that gives clarity to the requirements and restrictions around amendments. This is a core aspect of debate process and the Council is pleased to see these provisions expressed more concisely.
38. Furthermore, the Council acknowledges the much-improved provisions around foreshadowed motions and amendments, including the applicable definition. This section makes the use and application of foreshadowed motions and amendments by the meeting clearer and aligns with common meeting practice.
39. The Council further supports the LGSO's revisions to the procedural motion sections, including the clear direction that a meeting may move a procedural motion at any time after the item is tabled, as this supports a practical and flexible approach to managing agenda items.
40. However, the Council notes that the qualifying sentence in section 9.12.1 – *Types of procedural motions*, could be clearer as its reference to moving or seconding a *motion* in accordance with section 9.11.2 is not directly applicable, and should instead reference an *amendment*.
41. We do support the provision that outlines the expectation that procedural motions not be used as a vehicle for progressing other requests, e.g., further consultation, workshops, etc. However, we recommend that the chairperson be allowed some discretion in this area should they find a request (such as one for more information on the matter) reasonable under the circumstances.
42. The Council supports the organisation and clarity in the Notice of Motion (NoM) section. The amended timeframe of 10 clear working days for submitting a NoM to the chief executive is a welcome improvement, as it better enables staff to provide a considered response - particularly given the resource constraints often faced when responding under tighter timeframes.

## Section 10 – Minutes

43. The Council notes that standing order 10.2 would require (per use of the word “shall”) that the minutes record the reasons for withdrawal of an agenda item by the chief executive. This provision does not align with standing order 5.6 which provides that the chief executive “*should* inform” the meeting of the reason(s) for the withdrawal. The Council would recommend that these provisions be aligned to reflect that where the chief executive informs the meeting of the reasons for a report being withdrawn, this may be recorded in the minutes.

## Transparency and Accessibility

44. Transparency is a significant concern for the Council. Historically, copyright restrictions imposed by Standards New Zealand limited local authorities’ ability to share, publish, or reproduce standard orders, undermining public access to the rules governing democratic decision-making. Such lack of visibility risks eroding public trust, particularly in an environment where openness and accountability are critical to maintaining confidence in local government.
45. Of further concern is the lack of information that has been shared with councils regarding the cost of having to purchase the model standing orders from Standards New Zealand, if required. Councils have little to no direction regarding who would be responsible for covering this cost, which could be prohibitive.
46. The Council does not agree with any distribution framework that would prevent us from reproducing or sharing standing orders with our communities, including by making them accessible on our website, as is current practice. As it is unclear how these model standing orders can be made accessible to members of the public, the Council recommends that Standards New Zealand provide guidance on these matters as soon as possible.

## Conclusion

47. The Council acknowledges the challenges and complexity of developing model standing orders intended for all local government authorities. We continue to emphasise the importance of recognising that local authorities need the flexibility and discretion to tailor their standing orders in a way that best supports its elected members and communities.
48. The Council will follow with interest the development of the model standing orders and the progression of the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill. It is the Council’s sincere hope that any finalised model standing orders include a principles section that acknowledges the pillars of good governance and the importance of Te Ao Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
49. While the Council supports many of the revisions incorporated into the proposed LGSO, we would like to see certain provisions updated to improve context, clarity, and useability as outlined in Appendix 1. The Council reiterates its concern with the format, particularly the incomplete Table of Contents and lack of appropriate white space.
50. Finally, the Council reiterates our concerns around transparency and availability of the model standing orders. This is an essential document that guides participation in democratic decision-making and helps ensure local authority meetings are accessible, transparent, and inclusive. Any barriers to access, whether due to copyright restrictions or cost would be a grave disservice to our communities, elected members, organisation and the democracy we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

For any clarification on points within this submission please contact Megan Pearce, Manager Democratic Services at [Megan.Pearce@ccc.govt.nz](mailto:Megan.Pearce@ccc.govt.nz)

Ngā mihi,



Phil Mauger  
**Mayor of Christchurch**

**Christchurch City Council submission on DZ 9202:2025 Local Government Standing Orders – Appendix 1: Recommended Wording Changes**

Section	Section Title	Suggested Track Changes
1.1	Statutory references	<p>These standing orders include statutory and non-statutory meeting provisions and provide guidance on how those provisions should be applied in practice. Where a statutory provision applies, the statutory reference is noted. Where there is any inconsistency between these standing orders and legislation, legislation prevails.</p> <p>Statutory references apply throughout the period of the meeting whether or not standing orders have been suspended.</p> <p>In addition, these standing orders must comply, as appropriate, with the decision-making provisions of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) and be consistent with section 39 of the LGA and any other applicable legislation and council policies.</p> <p>Use of the word ‘must’ in a standing order indicates a mandatory legislative requirement. <u>Where that requirement is derived from legislation, the applicable legislative reference is noted.</u></p>
1.2	Definitions	<p><b>Debate</b> Speeches made by members that occur once a motion has been moved and seconded <u>and the Chairperson has verbally signalled that the meeting is in debate.</u></p> <p><b>Newspaper</b> <u>A periodical publication published (whether in New Zealand or elsewhere) at intervals not exceeding 40 days, or any copy of, or part of any copy of, any such publications. This includes every publication that at any time accompanies and is distributed along with any newspaper.</u></p>
2.1.1	Obligation to adopt standing orders	<p>As a general matter, the wording in this section does not seem to align with the intent of the proposed Local Government (Systems Improvements) Amendment Bill, which would mandate a set of Standing Orders. The provisions citing the current LGA, sch 7 requirement that councils <i>adopt</i> a set of Standing Orders by a 75% vote is confusing if these Standing Orders are to be mandated and the discretion to alter certain default provisions is limited to those listed.</p> <p>Further, the formatting in this section has two sets of lists, both designated (a), (b), (c), making it impossible to distinguish / reference the provisions accurately. The second set, designating the discretionary items that councils may adopt would sit more appropriately under section 2.1.3 – <i>Process for adoption and alteration of standing orders.</i></p>
2.1.1	Obligation to adopt standing orders	<p>Alongside adoption of these standing orders, the local authority also has the discretion to <u>apply an alternative to the default provisions noted in the following sections and</u> adopt:</p>



**Christchurch City Council submission on DZ 9202:2025 Local Government Standing Orders – Appendix 1: Recommended Wording Changes**

		<p>(a) Its general procedures for speaking and moving motions and amendments, as outlined in Appendix D;</p> <p>(b) The provision of a casting vote, as outlined in Appendix E;</p> <p>(c) The time limits for debate, public forum, deputations, petitions, and submissions.</p> <p><u>(d) Its meeting duration, as outlined in standing order 2.2.7, with a maximum meeting time of eight (8) hours unless otherwise resolved.</u></p>
6.1.2	Council should livestream or record meetings	<p>...</p> <p>Where a council intends to livestream and/or record meetings, the council should adopt protocols on the livestreaming and/or recording of meetings <u>and attendance via electronic link.</u></p>
6.2.1	Public forums	<p>...</p> <p>Matters raised in public forums should be within the jurisdiction of the council, and in the case of a committee or subcommittee, <u>community or local board</u>, any issue, idea, or matter raised in a public forum should fall within the terms of reference of that body.</p>
6.2.3	Requests and time limits	<p>Speakers can speak for up to five minutes (including questions), <u>unless the local authority has exercised its discretion consistent with standing order 2.1.1 and adopted alternative time limits for public forums and deputations.</u></p>
6.2.4	Restrictions	<p>Upon receipt, the chief executive (or their delegate) shall provide the chairperson with requests to speak at a public forum <u>or as a deputation.</u></p> <p>...</p> <p>The chairperson has the discretion to decline to hear a speaker or to terminate a presentation at any time where:</p> <p>(b) More than two <u>public forum</u> speakers have requested to speak on the same matter at the same meeting;</p> <p>(e) The <u>public forum</u> speaker has previously spoken on the same issue within the past 12 months;</p> <p>Where a member of the public has previously caused a disruption at multiple meetings, the chairperson may decline a <u>public forum or</u> deputation request and require the individual to provide their views in writing.</p>
6.2.6	Discussion and decisions on matters raised at public forums and deputations	<p>No discussion or decisions on the matter can be made at the meeting on issues raised during the public forum. <u>The meeting may request, by resolution, a report from staff or refer the matter to a committee or community / local board.</u></p>
6.3.2	Time limits	<p>Where a meeting is sitting to consider the hearing of submissions, the following time limits apply <u>unless the local authority has exercised its</u></p>

**Christchurch City Council submission on DZ 9202:2025 Local Government Standing Orders – Appendix 1: Recommended Wording Changes**

		<u>discretion consistent with standing order 2.1.1 and adopted alternative time limits for submissions:</u>
6.4.1	Form of petitions	... Petitions should: (b) Be received by the chief executive at least five <u>clear</u> working days before the meeting at which they will be presented;
7	Quorum requirements	Quorum <u>and attendance</u> requirements
7.7.2	Requests and conditions to attend by electronic link	A member shall give the chairperson and the chief executive at least two <u>clear</u> working days' notice when they want to attend a meeting by electronic link. If this is not possible due to illness or emergency, the member may give less notice.
7.7.5	Confidentiality	A member who is attending a meeting by <u>electronic audio or audiovisual</u> link shall ensure that the meeting's proceedings remain confidential during any time that the public is excluded.
8.2.8	Chairperson does not have a casting vote	The mayor, chairperson, or any other person presiding at a meeting has a deliberative vote but, in the case of an equality of votes, does not have a casting vote.  <u>Add cross reference regarding the discretionary aspect of this item as provided in standing order 2.1.1 and Appendix E.</u>
9.5	Time limits on speakers	During debate, all members will have three minutes' speaking time, <u>unless the local authority has exercised its discretion consistent with standing order 2.1.1 and adopted alternative time limits for debate.</u>
9.11.1	Options for speaking and moving	The following procedure for speaking and moving motions <u>and amendments</u> applies unless <u>the local authority has adopted an alternative option as provided for in standing order 2.1.1 and Appendix D,</u> <del>on the recommendation of the chairperson at the beginning of a meeting, the meeting resolves (by simple majority) to adopt either of the other two options in Appendix D for the meeting generally, or for any specified items on the agenda.</del>
9.11.3.1	Moving and seconding motions and amendments	... The chairperson may then state the motion or amendment and <u>should verbally signal when it is open</u> <del>if</del> for debate.
9.12.1	Types of procedural motions	Any member may move or second any one of the following procedural motions consistent with the requirements for moving or seconding an <u>motion amendment</u> in standing order 9.11.2 – Speaking and moving motions, <u>as adopted in accordance with standing order 2.1.1.</u> ...

**Christchurch City Council submission on DZ 9202:2025 Local Government Standing Orders – Appendix 1: Recommended Wording Changes**

		These procedural motions <del>shall</del> <u>should</u> be limited to advancing the directives outlined in (a) – (e) above and <del>may</del> <u>should</u> not include requests for further action (for example, additional consultation, a further report or workshop, and so on), <u>unless deemed reasonable at the discretion of the chairperson.</u>
9.15.1	Notice of motion to revoke or alter previous decision	... A notice of motion to revoke or alter a previous resolution shall meet the <del>general requirements</del> <u>conditions</u> for a notice of motion. <u>See also standing order 9.15.4 – Conditions to be met for a notice of motion.</u>
9.15.3	Restrictions created by a notice of motion to revoke or alter previous resolution	... Exceptions apply if, in the opinion of the chief executive: (a)... (b) By reason of repetitive notices, the effect of the notice is an attempt by a minority to frustrate the will of the <del>council or the committee</del> <u>decision-making body</u> that made the previous resolution.
9.15.4	Conditions to be met for a notice of motion	A notice of motion shall: (a) Be in writing, and can be via email; (b) Be signed by the mover and seconder, <u>which can include an email signature</u> ; (c) State the meeting at which it is proposed the motion be considered; (d) Be delivered to the chief executive at least 10 clear working days before the proposed meeting, or a shorter time at the discretion of the chief executive.  <del>The mover and seconder can send the notice of motion via email, which will include the members' signatures.</del>
9.15.5	Refusal of notice of motion	The chief executive, in consultation with the chairperson, may refuse to accept any notice of motion which, in their opinion: ... (f) Concerns a matter where council has delegated decision-making authority to a subordinate body or a community/local board, <u>in which case it may be referred in accordance with standing order 9.15.8</u> ; or
10.2	Items recorded in minutes	The chief executive shall keep the minutes of meetings. The minutes shall record: ... (u) The reasons for withdrawal of an agenda item by the chief executive <u>where they have informed the meeting of such reasons.</u>