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Council Meeting Agenda

17 November 2026

Extraordinary Council Meeting

WESTLAND
District Council | Te Kahui o Poutini

AGENDA

RĀRANGI TAKE

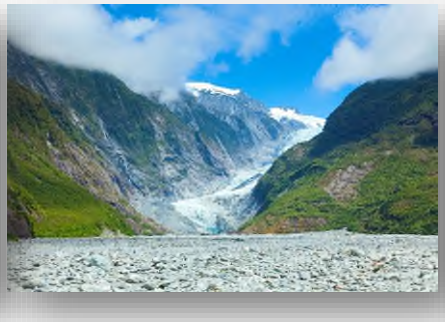
NOTICE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF

COUNCIL

to be held on **Tuesday, 17 November 2026,** commencing at **1 pm** at Level 1, Como House, 51 Tancred Street, Hokitika and via Zoom

Chairperson	Her Worship the Mayor
Deputy and Northern Ward Member:	Councillor Burden
Northern Ward Members:	Councillor Mackenzie, Councillor Maitland
Hokitika Ward Members:	Councillor Gillett, Councillor Martin, Councillor Walker
Southern Ward Members:	Councillor Manera, Councillor Munns
Iwi Representatives:	Kaiwhakahaere Madgwick, Kaiwhakahaere Tumahai

In accordance with clause 25A 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.

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. KARAKIA TĪMATANGA

OPENING KARAKIA

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

2. NGĀ WHAKAPAAHA

APOLOGIES

3. PŪRONGO KAIMAHI

STAFF REPORTS

Local Government (Systems Improvements) Amendment Act - Quorum and Voting Rights
Acting Chief Executive to speak to the report.

- **Appendix 1 -** Letter from Hon. Simon Watts, Minister of Local Government
- **Appendix 2 -** LGNZ Explainer: Removal of Voting Rights from Appointed Members
- **Appendix 3 -** Letter from Mayor and Acting Chief Executive, Westland District Council – Request for Exception

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
ON 26 NOVEMBER 2026 AT 1.00 PM
ST JOHNS HOKITIKA, 134 STAFFORD STREET, HOKITIKA AND VIA ZOOM

Report to Council

DATE: 17 November 2026

TO: Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Chief Executive

RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE – VOTING RIGHTS EXCEPTION REPORT

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider an application for an exception under the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Act 2026, for the Risk and Assurance Committee (R&A) Independent (non-elected) Chair.

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.

2. Background

On 18 September 2026, the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Act 2026 received Royal Assent. The Act reserves voting rights on Council committees, joint committees, subcommittees, and other subordinate decision-making bodies for elected members only.

The purpose of the legislative change is described as being to strengthen democratic accountability by ensuring voting rights remain with elected representatives.

Councils may continue to appoint non-elected members to specified committees to provide expertise, stakeholder perspectives, or community representation. However, unless an exception applies, non-elected members must not vote and are not counted toward the quorum of the meeting.

Councils are required to comply with these provisions from 18 March 2027.

The legislation provides a mechanism for Councils to apply for a Ministerial exception where there is a demonstrated need for specialist expertise or other exceptional circumstances. Any exceptions granted are expected to be limited.

The Act does allow for some prescribed exceptions, and also for a process to apply for an exception, where the Minister is satisfied these are necessary or desirable.

Exceptions can be made for:

(a) Any class or type of specified committee.
(b) A particular specified committee.
(c) Any class or type of non-elected member.

This report specifically addresses the R&A Committee.

3. Current Situation

The R&A Committee currently consists of:

(i) Mayor Helen Lash
(ii) Cr Mackenzie
(iii) Cr Martin
(iv) Kaiwhakahaere Tumahai
(v) David Ward (Independent Chair)

Under the current Terms of Reference, all five members have voting rights, and the quorum is three members (Chair plus two members; must include 1 Councillor)

The Independent Chair provides specialist governance, audit, financial reporting and risk management expertise to support Council's oversight responsibilities.

Local Government New Zealand has identified Risk and Assurance Committees as one of the committee types most likely to be affected by the legislative changes because of their reliance on independent specialist expertise.

The Committee's primary role is to provide assurance and oversight in relation to risk management, internal controls, financial reporting, external audit and governance processes. Unlike most Council committees, it is established principally for assurance purposes rather than policy development or service delivery oversight.

Council recognised the specialist expertise and independent governance assurance provided by the Independent Chair. The appointment of an Independent Chair followed guidance from the Office of the Auditor-General and reflects recognised good practice for local government Risk and Assurance Committees. The Independent Chair provides an objective perspective independent of both elected governance and operational management, supporting robust oversight of risk, internal controls, financial reporting and audit matters.

A request for an exception is to be made in writing to the Minister of Local Government by 18 November 2026, and must include:

a) A copy of a Council resolution in support of the exception. This can be achieved today.
b) Information about the issue the exception would address, why existing governance arrangements would not adequately address the issue, and how the Council would manage the issues without an exception.
c) Information about the role of the committee, the proposed role of non-elected members, and the steps that would be taken to maintain democratic legitimacy and public accountability.
d) Information about how the exception fits within the broader statutory framework, including any comparable precedents.

If an exception is not granted, Council will need to amend the Terms of Reference to:

a) Remove voting rights of the Independent Chair.
b) Clarify that the Independent Chair does not count towards quorum calculations.
c) Amend quorum requirements accordingly; and
d) Clarify the Independent Chair's role in leading meetings, providing independent advice and supporting governance oversight.

It was the Minister's intention to communicate decisions in early 2027, with approved exceptions to come into force at the end of the transition period.

Regardless of the decision on seeking a Ministerial exception, staff will also prepare an alternative compliant structure to implement from 18 March 2027, should an exception not be granted.

A draft application for an exception is attached for Council's consideration.

Staff consider that the R&A Committee is one of the committee types most affected by the legislative changes due to its reliance on independent specialist expertise and governance assurance. Staff consider there is a reasonable basis for seeking an exception and that the R&A Committee presents a stronger case than many committee types due to its assurance role, reliance on independent expertise and the specialist functions performed by the Independent Chair, while also preparing alternative arrangements should the exception not be granted.

4. Options

The proposal is that Council determines whether to submit an application for an exception under the Local Government (Systems Improvements) Amendment Act 2026 in respect of the R&A Committee Independent Chair.

4.1. Option 1 – Apply for an exception.

4.2. Option 2 – Do not apply for an exception.

5. Assessment of Options

5.1 Option 1 – Apply for an exception

Council makes an application for an exception under the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Act 2026, for the R&A Committee Independent Chair, allowing the Independent Chair of the R&A Committee to continue voting and being counted towards a quorum.

Advantages

- Retains the existing governance arrangements for the R&A Committee.
- Allows the Independent Chair to continue participating fully in Committee decisions.
- Avoids the need to amend the Committee's voting and quorum arrangements, provided the exception is granted.

Disadvantages

- The exception would depart from the new general legislative requirements for non-elected committee members.
- Ministerial approval is required and is not guaranteed.

5.2 Option 2 – Do not apply for an exception

Council decides to not make an application for an exception under the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Act 2026, for the R&A Committee Independent Chair.

Advantages

- Aligns the Committee's voting and quorum arrangements with the new legislative requirements.
- Does not require an application to the Minister.

Disadvantages

- Requires changes to the Committee's existing governance arrangements.

- Independent members would no longer have voting rights or be counted towards a quorum.
- Changes the role of the Independent Chairperson in Committee decision-making.

Assessment of Significance

This matter is deemed to be low significance under Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

Financial

There is no additional cost associated with making an application for an exception.

Cost effectiveness was considered during the appointment of the Independent Chair, with associated budgets approved by Council through the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan process.

6. Risk Assessment

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
An exception application may not be approved, requiring Council to implement a draft compliance committee structure.	Low	Low	Staff will prepare a draft compliant committee structure, draft Terms of Reference amendments and clarify the future role of the Independent Chair so these changes can be implemented promptly if required.
Health and Safety	Low	Low	There are no health and safety risks associated with Council making a decision.
Reputational	Medium	Medium	Multiple Councils have already met and have approved an application to the Minister of Local Government for an exception.

7. Preferred Option and Reasons

The preferred option is Option 1 due to retaining the continuity of existing governance arrangements, allowing the Independent Chair to continue participating fully in Committee decisions, and avoiding the need to amend the Committee's voting and quorum arrangements should the exception be granted.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That the Risk and Assurance Committee – Voting Rights Exception Report is accepted.

8.2 That Council approves the attached application to the Minister of Local Government seeking an exception for the Independent Chair of the Risk and Assurance Committee, including any amendments resolved by Council.

Barbara Phillips
Chief Executive

Appendix 1: Letter from Hon Simon Watts, Minister of Local Government
Appendix 2: LGNZ Explainer: Removal of Voting Rights from Appointed Members
Appendix 3: Letter from Mayor and Chief Executive, Westland District Council – Request for Exception

Hon Simon Watts

Minister for Building and Construction
Minister of Climate Change
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Revenue
Minister for Auckland

29 SEP 2026

Mayors and regional council chairs
By email

Dear Mayors and Chairs

Voting at council committee meetings

On 18 September 2026, the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Act 2026 received Royal assent. The Act reserves voting rights on council committees, joint committees, subcommittees, and other subordinate decision-making bodies ("specified committees") for elected members only.

As I have stated previously, the purpose of this change is to strengthen democratic accountability. Councils may continue to appoint non-elected members to specified committees to provide expertise, stakeholder perspectives, or community representation. However, unless an exception applies, non-elected members must not vote and are not counted toward the quorum of the meeting.

Your council must comply with the Act from 18 March 2027. The purpose of this transition period is to ensure you have enough time to change the structure of or delegations to your council's specified committees, if required.

The Act also provides for certain exceptions. These include committees or appointments that are required under or for the purposes of another enactment and arrangements required to give effect to Treaty settlements.

Additionally, the Act provides for the Governor-General, on the recommendation of the Minister of Local Government, to grant exceptions where the Minister is satisfied these are necessary or desirable. Exceptions may be time-limited or indefinite, and with or without conditions.

My expectations are that exceptions will be granted rarely. The Government's policy is that non-elected members should generally be non-voting. Councils seeking an exception will therefore need to demonstrate a clear and specific justification that supports the statutory test that the exception is necessary or desirable.

The next page of this letter contains information on how requests for exceptions will be considered.

If your council considers that an exception may be required, I encourage you to submit a request in writing to the Minister of Local Government by 18 November 2026 enclosing:

- A copy of a resolution from your council in support of the exception.
- Information about the issue the exception would address, why existing governance arrangements would not adequately address the issue, and how the council would manage the issue without an exception.
- Information about the role of the committee, the proposed role of non-elected members, and the steps that would be taken to maintain democratic legitimacy and public accountability.
- Information about how the exception fits within the broader statutory framework, including any comparable precedents.

Requests regarding a joint committee should ideally have the support of all councils who are members of the joint committee.

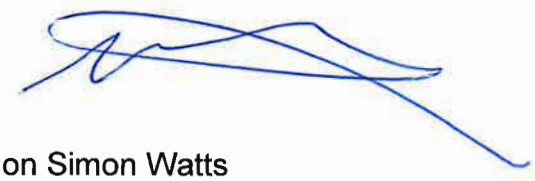
Requests should contain sufficient information for the Minister to recommend the exception to the Governor-General.

Officials at the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) will assess any requests received and provide advice to the Minister of Local Government after the election. It is my intention that decisions will be made and communicated early next year, and exceptions will come into force at the end of the transition period.

If you require more information:

- Visit the MCERT website at www.mcert.govt.nz/our-work/local-government/local-government-system-improvements/.
- Contact your MCERT Local Government Partnership Director.

Yours sincerely



Hon Simon Watts
Minister of Local Government

Explainer: removal of voting rights from appointed members

Summary

The Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Act removed the ability of councils to enable non-elected appointed members on most committees and sub-committees to vote and be counted as part of quorum. However, the legislation retains councils' ability to appoint non-elected members to committees and sub-committees.

There are some exclusions to the ban that are specified in the Bill. The Minister of Local Government (or in specified cases the Local Government Commission) can also grant exceptions to these changes. The changes will not apply until six months after the enactment of the Bill: 18 March 2027.

The new requirements

The Act creates a new category of committee, called "specified committees", which incorporates all the committees, sub-committees and subordinate bodies on which non-elected appointed members cannot vote. The Act also makes it clear that non-elected appointed members on those committees do not count towards the quorum. It also describes the process by which councils can seek an exemption.

Non-elected members and the quorum

For specified committees, non-elected members do not count when deciding on the number of members needed to reach quorum, and when determining if a meeting has a quorum.

Legislated exceptions

For some committees, non-elected appointed members still count towards the quorum and are still able to vote. These committees, in addition to committees that have received a ministerial exception under section 260A (see below), are any specified committees established by:

- enactments other than the LGA 2002, or
- as a result of a Treaty settlement.

In addition, there are several committees given an exception in the legislation: the Ohai Railway Fund Committee, the Raupo Drainage Committee, and the Tai Poutini Plan Committee.

The process for making additional exceptions

The Act introduces a new Order in Council power that allows new exceptions to be made for:

- any class or type of specified committee,
- a particular specified committee,
- any class or type of non-elected member.

An exception can be granted for an indefinite or specified period of time and can specify conditions. The Minister is required to consult with the relevant local authority (or in the case of a joint committee set up under clause19B of Schedule 3, the Local Government Commission).

In order to grant an exception, the Minister needs to be satisfied that the exception is necessary or desirable.

The Minister wrote to councils on 29 September 2026 setting out his proposed process for requests for exemptions and asked that these be made in writing by 18 November 2026. The Minister said that exceptions would be granted rarely, in line with current government policy.

Appointment of non-elected members

These changes do not remove councils' ability to appoint non-elected members to committees or sub-committees. The current requirement (set out in clause 31(3) of Schedule 7, LGA 2002) still applies: that the local authority when making the appointment be of the opinion that person has the skills, attributes or knowledge that will assist the work of the committee or subcommittee.

Potential impacts for councils

Potentially affected types of committees

Following the Government's announcement that it intended to remove voting by non-elected appointed members on committees, LGNZ surveyed councils to understand the potential impact, and supplemented this with additional information gathered from council websites. This showed that appointed members are used in a variety of governance and representative contexts. These committees or sub-committees mostly provide specialist advice to the council or committees that make decisions, but do in some cases make direct decisions. Removal of voting rights from appointed members would remove the ability for appointed members to participate in these roles in their current form.

The current system of voting rights also provides a level of transparency over the views and advice of non-elected members. Alongside LGOIMA requirements of public notice and attendance for committees, voting rights meant that the minutes could record non-elected members' votes, and if they moved or seconded resolutions or amendments.

Categories of committees, sub-committees and subordinate bodies that will be affected by these changes include:

> **Audit and risk committees**: Virtually all councils have some form of audit and risk committee, and, following guidance from the Office of the Auditor General, have appointed independent members with expertise in financial reporting and risk management to those committees. Frequently these members are appointed as chair.
>
> **Grant committees**: all territorial authorities, and many regional councils, have committees established to make community grants. And, in most cases, local residents with specific experience are appointed to those committees, in the same way

that central government appoints non-elected members to its Lottery Grants Committees. Examples include Creative Community Committees and Sports NZ Travel Grants Committees.

Management committees: Many councils use "mixed membership" committees for managing reserves or community halls. Their typical role involves day-to-day operations like routine upkeep, arranging volunteer planting days, and managing facility bookings (like community halls or sports fields). These are cost effective ways of involving local volunteers in the operation of local public services.

Māori advisory committees: these committees are designed to provide a way for councils to meet their statutory obligations for considering Iwi/Māori views, and to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority.

Public art committees: while these take various forms, they typically involve appointed members with special expertise in public art brought together to make recommendations on matters that frequently involve high levels of public interest.

Impacts of quorum changes

The removal of non-elected members from counting towards quorum will mean that the council will need to review the quorum requirements and other aspects of the terms of reference.

Possible options for councils

These changes will have significant practical impacts. If councils do not gain an exemption, and still wish to make use of additional skills, attributes or knowledge, will need to consider the following options:

1. ### Retain appointed members but make changes in the committee's terms of reference

   Amend the subsidiary body's terms of reference to remove the authority of any non-elected appointed members to vote. There may also be a need to revise the quorum given there will be fewer members who can count towards it.

   While not being able to vote or count towards a quorum, the appointed member will continue to have the right to speak on the same basis as other members.

   Councils may also want to explore how the advice or views of appointed members could be captured in order to support transparency.

2. ### Use an alternative mechanism

   Councils could choose to disband the subsidiary body and replace it with an alternative approach. It might be that instead of a committee, some other structure will deliver the same outcome, especially if the role is primarily advisory. In the case of a joint committee where one council's representatives are non-elected members, such as staff, a CCO model may deliver the same outcomes.

Other approaches could be used to consider issues and make recommendations for consideration by a governing body. For example:

- project team
- workshop
- panel
- focus group
- forum
- advisory group

3. Contract an existing or new provider

Contract an existing third party or a group of individuals to deliver the intended outcome. In the case of committees/sub-committees that allocate grants (such as travel grants for young sports people) or make decisions about who deserves to be given a civic honour, a council could choose to make a grant to an independent organisation on the condition that the group fulfils the original purpose of the committee. Such arrangements may mean that the activity will continue, but these arrangements will not have the same transparency and accountability as if they are undertaken by a committee.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Her Worship the Mayor
Helen Lash
Westland District Council
36 Weld Street, Private Bag 704,
Hokitika 7842

P: 027 242 7484
E: mayor.lash@westlanddc.govt.nz

FILE REF: CCL 7

18 November 2026

Ministries for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport
Office of Hon Simon Watts
Minister of Local Government

Via email: s.watts@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister Watts

VOTING AT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS
WESTLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE – REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION

The Westland District Council appreciates the opportunity to provide information in support of its request for an exception under the Local Government (Systems Improvements) Amendment Act 2026 in relation to voting rights on council committees.

This request is for the position of **Chair of the Risk and Assurance Committee.**

The Independent Chair provides specialist expertise and independent governance assurance.

1. **A copy of our Council Resolution** in support of the exception is attached.

2. **Information about the issue the exception would address, why existing governance arrangements would not adequately address the issue, and how the Council would manage the issue without an exception:**

   The Westland District Council Risk and Assurance Committee provides independent oversight and assurance to Council regarding risk management, internal controls, financial reporting, audit processes, compliance and governance. The Committee reports directly to Council and is an important component of Council's governance and accountability framework.

   The Committee is intentionally chaired by an independent external appointee with specialist expertise in financial reporting, governance, risk management, internal control and audit. Council adopted this structure in recognition of sector best practice and guidance promoting independent risk and assurance oversight. The appointment of an Independent Chair is consistent with guidance from the Office of the Auditor-General and reflects recognised good practice across the local government sector. The Independent Chair provides an objective and independent perspective that is separate from both elected governance and operational

management. This independence assists the Committee to scrutinise risk, control, compliance and financial reporting matters without actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The Independent Chair is responsible for leading committee meetings, facilitating robust discussion, providing constructive challenge, and assisting elected members to understand complex technical matters while maintaining the Committee's assurance focus.

The Risk and Assurance Committee has a unique assurance role within Council's governance framework. The Committee works closely with Council's external auditor, receives and considers audit findings, monitors management responses to audit recommendations, and may meet with the external auditor without management present. The Committee also has delegated authority in relation to the engagement of the external auditor and oversight of special investigations. These responsibilities require a high degree of independence, objectivity and specialist expertise and distinguish the Committee from many other Council committees. The Independent Chair plays a critical role in maintaining the independence, objectivity and credibility of this assurance function. Their external perspective provides constructive challenge to both governance and management and helps ensure that assurance activities are undertaken with an appropriately independent mindset. Retaining voting rights reinforces the Chair's ability to participate fully in the Committee's collective conclusions and recommendations, strengthening confidence in the Committee's oversight role and the integrity of its assurance processes.

Without an exception, the Independent Chair would no longer be able to vote and would not count towards a quorum. While the Committee could continue to operate in a modified form, the loss of voting rights would diminish the Chair's formal role within the Committee and reduce the ability of the Committee to function as originally intended. The Committee's effectiveness relies on the active participation of all members, including the Independent Chair, in forming collective recommendations to Council. The current governance arrangements are founded on the principle that all members appointed to the Committee contribute equally to its deliberations and recommendations.

Council considers that retaining voting rights for the Independent Chair is desirable because the position has been specifically appointed for its governance, risk and assurance expertise and independence. Council considers the exception to be desirable, and potentially necessary, to maintain the effectiveness of its established governance assurance framework and to ensure the continued contribution of independent specialist expertise to audit and risk oversight. The exception would allow Council to maintain a governance framework that has operated effectively and aligns with recognised local government audit and risk practices.

If an exception is not granted, Council will amend the Committee's Terms of Reference to remove voting rights for the Independent Chair, amend quorum provisions accordingly and clarify that the Chair's role is advisory and facilitative. The Independent Chair would continue to provide advice, leadership and specialist expertise to the Committee, but without voting rights. While this would ensure compliance with the legislation, Council considers that it would reduce the Independent Chair's ability to participate fully in the Committee's collective deliberations, recommendations and assurance functions. Council would also review alternative approaches to maintaining robust risk and assurance oversight within the requirements of the legislation.

3. Information about the role of the committee, the proposed role of non-elected members, and the steps that would be taken to maintain democratic legitimacy and public accountability:

The Risk and Assurance Committee is an advisory committee established by Council to provide independent oversight and assurance and to assist Council in discharging its governance responsibilities. The Committee plays a key role in promoting transparency, accountability and sound stewardship of public resources by independently reviewing matters relating to risk, internal control, audit and financial reporting.

The Committee's responsibilities include oversight of risk management, internal controls, financial reporting, external audit, legislative compliance and governance processes. The Committee reports and makes recommendations directly to Council. Final decision-making authority remains with Council except for limited delegations relating primarily to audit engagement matters and specialist investigations.

The Independent Chair is a non-elected member appointed because of their specialist skills, attributes, knowledge and experience. The role is intended to bring an external and objective perspective to audit, risk and assurance matters and to strengthen governance oversight. The independent Chair provides technical expertise that complements, rather than replaces, the democratic mandate of elected members.

The Committee currently consists of three elected members, one Iwi representative, and one Independent Chair. Elected members hold a clear majority of committee membership. Any resolution of the Committee therefore requires support from elected members regardless of the voting status of the Independent Chair.

Democratic legitimacy and public accountability would continue to be maintained because:

- the majority of Committee members are elected representatives;
- Committee meetings are conducted under Council's governance framework and standing orders;
- the Committee reports directly to Council after each meeting;
- Council retains ultimate responsibility for governance, financial stewardship and decision-making; and
- the Independent Chair acts in an assurance and oversight capacity rather than as a representative decision-maker.

Accordingly, granting voting rights to the Independent Chair would not diminish democratic accountability but would allow Council to continue benefiting from independent specialist expertise within a committee structure where elected members remain the majority and retain ultimate authority.

4. Information about how the exception fits within the broader statutory framework, including any comparable precedents:

The exception sought is consistent with the purpose of the Local Government Act 2002 requirement permitting councils to appoint non-elected members to committees where those members possess skills, attributes or knowledge that will assist the work of the committee. Audit and Risk Committees exist primarily to provide independent oversight and assurance. Their functions include engagement with external auditors, oversight of audit findings, risk management frameworks and systems of internal control. They do not generally exercise broad policy-making or decision-making powers.

The request is also consistent with the statutory test that an exception may be granted where the Minister is satisfied it is necessary or desirable. Council considers the exception desirable because it supports effective governance, independent assurance and prudent stewardship of public resources. The exception would preserve an established assurance mechanism designed to provide Council, ratepayers and external stakeholders with confidence that significant risks, financial reporting matters and audit findings are being subject to independent scrutiny. These objectives are closely aligned with the principles set out in section 14 of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Committee's purpose.

Local Government New Zealand has identified Audit and Risk Committees as among the committee types most significantly affected by the removal of voting rights, noting that councils commonly appoint independent members with expertise in financial reporting and risk management and frequently appoint those members as Chair.

The proposed exception is limited in scope. It applies only to the position of Independent Chair of the Risk and Assurance Committee and does not seek broader voting rights for appointed members across Council's governance structure. The request therefore preserves the Government's objective of democratic accountability while recognising the unique role that independent audit and risk expertise plays in supporting effective local government governance.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, Council respectfully requests that an exception be granted for the position of Independent Chair of the Risk and Assurance Committee. Council considers that the proposed exception is limited in scope, preserves democratic accountability, and supports effective governance, independent assurance and stewardship of public resources. The exception would enable Council to retain an established governance arrangement that promotes transparency, accountability and confidence in its oversight of risk, audit and financial reporting matters.

We would be pleased to provide any additional information required to assist in considering this request.
Please contact governance@westlanddc.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lash
Mayor of Westland

Stephen Lewis
Acting Chief Executive