

Public Submissions Policy

Waitaki District Council

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1 Introduction

Waitaki District Council is committed to ensuring that community views inform significant decisions. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2002, the Council consults on key matters such as Long Term Plans, and bylaws. The Council may also seek feedback on other issues that, while not legally required, are considered important for the community. The Significance and Engagement Policy outlines how the Council determines the appropriate level of engagement for different decisions.

What is a submission?

A submission is formal feedback to Council (from an individual or an organisation/group) in response to a proposal or matter, that requires a decision by Council. Consultations or feedback opportunities have specified opening and closing dates when feedback will be received.

A submission does not include informal feedback such as comments on Council social media platforms, comments in the media, or ad-hoc communications with Council staff.

Who can make a submission?

Anyone can make a submission regardless of their age or place of residence. You don't need to be a ratepayer to make a submission. Submissions can be made by individuals or representatives of an organisation, group, or agency.

Submissions are public documents

Submissions are public documents. While personal contact details and demographic information will be removed from any publicly available copy, the submitter's name will be published.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for managing public submissions in a manner that promotes effective community engagement and ensures compliance with legal and ethical standards.

Key outcomes of the policy are:

- To provide clarity on public participation in local government decision-making ensuring all community members can provide input on matters that affect them.
- To maintain transparency in how submissions are received, processed, and considered, holding Council accountable to the public.
- To uphold ethical standards by managing submissions in a way that protects privacy, prevents harmful content, and fosters respectful and constructive community engagement.
- To ensure that submission handling complies with relevant legislation, including the Public Records Act 2005 and privacy laws.

3 Scope

This policy applies to any organisation, member of the public, elected members, and Council employees making a submission on a consultation initiated by the Council. It does not apply to submissions to consultations not undertaken by the Waitaki District Council.

This policy relates to handling submissions under the Local Government Act (LGA 2002) and may be used for other areas of legislation, **excluding submissions under the Resource Management Act 1991**, which follow a separate process.

4 Policy

4.1 Acceptable formats and languages

4.1.1 Acceptable formats

Submissions will be accepted in the following formats:

- a. Written or spoken
- b. New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)
- c. Recorded as video or audio files.

If you would like to share your submission verbally, or in NZSL, please email: consult@waitaki.govt.nz so we can work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Please note: Guidance on the content for a submission cannot be provided by Council staff or Elected members.

4.1.2 Required information for valid submissions

For a submission to be valid and considered, it must be made by a genuine person and include:

- a. First and last names.
- b. Organisation (if submitting on behalf of your business or organisation).
- c. Contact phone number and email if the submitter wishes to be heard.

Anonymous submissions will not be accepted.

4.2 Submission content standards

To maintain constructive community engagement and protect all parties, Council manages submission content according to the following standards:

4.2.1 Content that may be excluded or redacted

Council reserves the right to exclude any submission, either in part or in full, if it contains content that is determined to be:

- a. Offensive language including profanity.
- b. Discriminatory, or defamatory.
- c. Personal threats or harassment of Council or staff members (any potential threat will be referred to the Chief Executive, relevant Director/Manager, and potentially referred to the New Zealand Police).
- d. Sensitive or confidential information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

In accordance with Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

4.2.2 Legibility and clarity

All submissions must be legible. If you have difficulty writing, please contact us to arrange alternative submission methods. Staff are not responsible for misinterpreting illegible submissions.

4.2.3 Guiding principle

In cases of uncertainty, all submissions shall be accepted, and content will be preserved as much as possible.

4.2.4 Protecting staff and elected members

If a specific elected member or employee name is referred to within a submission made by another person, that name and role maybe redacted.

4.2.5 Pro-forma submissions and petitions

Pro-forma submissions (multiple submissions with identical content) will be presented to decision-makers as a single submission with all submitters' names and a tally. All submissions will still be counted individually.

Petitions will be treated as one submission.

4.2.6 Final decisions on content

Waitaki District Council's Executive Leadership Team or Chief Executive will be responsible for the final decision on whether any submission or part thereof should be removed from publication.

Where a submission has been removed from publication due to its content, officers will be transparent with Elected Members about the reasons for removal.

4.3 Supplementary Information

4.3.1 After making a submission, you can provide supplementary information within the consultation period. This will not be treated as a new submission.

4.3.2 The content of Supplementary Information should meet the same criteria as stated in Item 4.2 Submission content standards.

4.3.3 If supplementary information is provided outside the consultation period, it will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether hearings and deliberations have occurred.

4.4 Submitters who wish to present their views

4.4.1 When required or requested, Council will consider providing an opportunity for submitters to speak to their submission at the end of the submission period.

4.4.2. Submitters who wish to speak must provide a contact phone number and email address.

4.5 Hearings

4.5.1 When hearings are being held, submitters have the option to present their submission either in person or online.

4.5.2 When hearings are being held, those who have indicated they wish to be heard will be contacted to schedule their speaking slot.

Hearings are open to the public and are livestreamed.

Speaking times:

- Individual submitters will generally be allocated 5 minutes to present to elected members, which includes time for questions and answers.
- Community Boards/Organisations will generally be allocated 10 minutes to present to elected members, which includes time for questions and answers.

4.6 Withdrawing or Late Submissions

4.6.1 Withdrawing your submission

If you wish to withdraw your submission, this should be done within the consultation period. Requests to withdraw after the consultation period has closed will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

4.6.2 Late submissions

A late submission is any submission received after the consultation closing date and time. For postal submissions, this includes any submission post-marked after the closing date.

Late submissions may be accepted at Council's discretion.

5 Handling and Privacy

5.1 Personal contact details and demographic information will be removed from any publicly available copy, but the submitter's name will be published.

5.2 If a submitter contacts Council with extenuating circumstances for withholding their name prior to the submission closure date, their name may be removed from publication at the discretion of Council.

5.3 Only relevant staff members will have access to unredacted versions of submissions in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

5.4 Submissions will be kept in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005.

6 Employee Submissions

Council recognises employees are also ratepayers and residents of the district where they work.

6.1 It is the democratic right of every person to be able to submit and be involved in any matter that they consider could impact upon them, including those who are employed by Council.

6.2 As an employee of Council, personal submissions have the potential to be misinterpreted as Council's view. Therefore, staff making submissions need to consider:

- Whether a conflict of interest exists and what measures need to be put in place to manage it.
- Ensuring the submission is clearly that of the individual, not the opinion of Council.
- Avoid disclosing information that is privileged or not publicly available.

Elected Members Making Submissions:

When elected members make submissions, they must declare any conflicts of interest and remove themselves from related deliberations and decisions in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968 and the Code of Conduct.

Appendix 1: Definitions

Conflict of interest	arises when a Council employee’s personal interests—whether actual, potential, or perceived—intersect with their professional responsibilities in a way that could compromise, or appear to compromise, the integrity, impartiality, or transparency of Council decision-making.
Consultation	process generally required by statute or triggered by the Significance and Engagement Policy. This process is generally timebound, transactional and asking for feedback on a Council proposal, to enable citizen participation. This process aids and informs decision-making.
Defamatory language/content	a term used to describe statements or content that are untrue, slanderous, or libelous, that can cause real damage to a person's reputation.
Discriminatory language/content	words, phrases or content that tends to stereotype individuals, groups, races, or nationalities. Words to treat others unfairly or put them at a disadvantage based on race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.
Engagement	the process of “listening” to inform decision making, and is often informal, fluid and built on relationships. This process involves seeking input from or involving the community, particularly those affected by or interested in a decision, to inform and assist in the process of developing proposals.
Formal feedback	a structured, planned, and documented way of communication. Council usually refers to this as a submission.
Informal feedback	casual, spontaneous, unscheduled form of communication.
Late submission	any submission received after the consultation closing date and time, including postal submissions post-marked after the closing date.
Offensive language/content	language or content that is viewed as abusive, threatening, or discriminatory, and which may cause negative impact to individuals or groups.
Redacted	to obscure, censor or edit (confidential/sensitive parts of text) before publication or distribution.
Submission	is formal feedback to Council from an individual or an organisation/group in response to a proposal or matter, upon which a decision is required by Council. Submissions are public documents.
Threatening language/content	language/content that expresses a sense of danger, harm, or aggression towards a person or group. It could be verbal or written, and could include intimidation, force, or an attempt to manipulate.
Unredacted	not having had sections censored or obscured.
Waitaki District Council	also referred to as “Council”, “we”, “our” or “us”.

Appendix 2: Related documents

References

[Local Government Act 2002](#)

[The Privacy Act 2020](#)

[Public Records Act 2005](#)

[Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987](#)

Related Documents

[Significance and Engagement Policy](#)