

# DZ 9202:2025

## Local Government Standing Orders

Submission to Standards New Zealand

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December 2025



# Taituarā Submission on DZ 9202:2025 – Local Government Standing Orders

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## Introduction

Taituarā-Local Government Professionals Aotearoa (‘Taituarā’) thanks Standards New Zealand for the opportunity to submit in respect of DZ 9202:2025 – Local Government Standing Orders.

Taituarā is New Zealand’s leading network for local government professionals. A few words about us. Taituarā is Aotearoa New Zealand’s leading membership network for professionals working in, and for, local government. We have a membership base of over 1,000 members drawn from local authority of Chief Executives, managers, and staff across all 78 local authorities. What unites Taituarā members is our commitment to be our own professional best, supporting local government excellence through connection, collaboration, and care for the wellbeing of our communities.

Taituarā strengthens the local government sector by using our members’ insights and experience to influence the public policy debate. We submit on legislation and regulations to provide perspectives on what works and how to make policy work.

This submission draws on feedback from members of the Taituarā Democracy and Participation Reference Group (DPRG). It reflects practical experiences and recommendations for ensuring Local Government Standing Orders are fit for purpose and respond to the diversity across the local government sector in New Zealand. Taituarā also notes that a representative from its Democracy and Participation Reference Group (DPRG) participated in the Standards New Zealand working party that developed DZ 9202:2025. This involvement ensured that practical governance experience informed the drafting process.<sup>1</sup>

## Overall Position

Taituarā supports standing orders that are clear, practical, and accessible for all users. They should be written in plain English, use an active voice, and maintain consistent language and structure throughout. Standing orders must reflect cultural

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<sup>1</sup> In preparing this submission, Taituarā considered Local Government New Zealand’s (LGNZ) position.

responsiveness, including integration of principles that support respectful engagement, not just symbolic references.

We advocate for transparency and openness, ensuring councils can publish and share standing orders without copyright barriers. The design should prioritise ease of use, with logical structure, clear headings, and sufficient white space to support quick reference during meetings. In addition, standing orders should be written and presented in a way that improves public understanding of council meeting procedures, enabling communities to follow decision-making processes confidently and engage more effectively in local democracy.

Flexibility is essential to accommodate diverse governance arrangements, including mechanisms for councils to add non-contradictory appendices for local practices. Standing orders should enable consistency across the sector without imposing compliance costs or punitive mechanisms.

Our recommendations aim to deliver standing orders that are fit for purpose, culturally inclusive, and responsive to the needs of local government professionals and communities. Finally, standing orders must remain current and aligned with legislation through a structured review cycle and a clear feedback process for councils to raise issues between reviews.

## Strengthening Governance Principles

Section 39 of the Local Government Act 2002 provides a strong foundation for governance by requiring clarity of roles, effective and transparent structures, separation of regulatory and non-regulatory responsibilities, good employer obligations, and sound relationships between elected members and management. However, these principles do not fully address the practical and cultural dimensions of modern governance. To strengthen the standard, additional principles should be embedded that go beyond structural compliance and reflect values that support inclusive, respectful, and transparent local democracy.

### **Additional principles should include:**

- **Transparency in practice:** Public notice of meetings, open discussions, and accessible information.
- **Confidentiality safeguards:** Clear expectations for handling sensitive matters in accordance with legislation.
- **Community representation:** Consider the diversity of communities, their views, and future interests in decision-making.
- **Cultural responsiveness:** Acknowledge Te Ao Māori and local tikanga in meeting processes.
- **Natural justice:** Ensure decision-makers maintain open minds and fair processes.

- Standards of behaviour: Foster participation without intimidation, bullying, or personal criticism.
- Professionalism: Align conduct with good governance principles and council codes of conduct.

**Recommendation:**

Explicitly incorporate these additional governance principles into the standard to complement section 39 of the Local Government Act and strengthen transparency, cultural responsiveness, and good governance practices across the sector.

## Sector Feedback and Council Responses

This submission reflects broad sector feedback gathered through Taituarā's engagement with governance professionals in its Democracy and Participation Reference Group (DPRG). In addition to the themes outlined here, individual councils have provided their own submissions with detailed technical changes. These council-specific contributions reinforce the importance of a flexible and responsive approach to standing orders that can accommodate diverse governance contexts.

**Recommendation:**

Ensure the final standard allows councils to incorporate technical refinements that address their unique governance needs.

**Clarification:** Technical refinements refer to minor adjustments that improve clarity and usability without altering the intent of the standard. Examples include correcting ambiguous language, updating statutory references, improving formatting for readability, and allowing councils to incorporate local procedural variations where optionality has been provided for.

## Catering for Diversity

Standard standing orders must accommodate the diverse governance contexts across councils. Auckland Council's collaborative model and councils with significant Māori populations require provisions that enable respectful engagement, including te reo Māori headings and a full translation of the document. A feedback mechanism should be included so councils can report issues and suggest improvements between scheduled reviews. In addition, the new standardised framework must accommodate the differing governance structures anticipated for in Combined Territorial Boards.

Combined Territorial Boards will operate under governance arrangements that differ significantly from existing councils. Their composition, voting rights, and decision-making processes will span multiple territorial areas, creating complexities that standard standing orders cannot address. These boards may also have unique statutory responsibilities and partnership obligations, including iwi and regional collaborations, requiring tailored protocols for engagement and representation. The standardised approach carries risks such as ambiguity, inefficiency, and potential non-compliance.

**Recommendation:**

Standards New Zealand should carefully consider how the new standard will operate across the full range of governance arrangements in local government, including emerging structures such as Combined Territorial Boards. The standard must clearly identify optional provisions and provide mechanisms such as non-contradictory appendices to enable councils and boards to reflect local practices and cultural responsiveness while maintaining compliance with a single standard set.

## Ease of Use

Governance advisors need standing orders that are clear, accessible, and practical for use in real-time meeting environments. The current Standards NZ format, with dense typefaces and technical layout, does not meet these needs and makes it harder to provide quick, accurate advice to chairs and participants. Standing orders should be designed for usability, with irrelevant provisions removed and versions tailored for different local bodies such as territorial authorities, regional councils, community boards, and local boards. Design should include clear headings, logical structure, and sufficient white space (e.g., minimum double line spacing) to support quick reference during meetings.

**Recommendation:**

Adopt a user-friendly design that prioritises clarity and accessibility and produce tailored versions for each type of local authority to ensure relevance and ease of application.

## Regular Review for Legislative Alignment

Standing orders must remain accurate and responsive to legislative changes to avoid inefficiencies and risks when they become outdated. Without a clear requirement for scheduled review, councils will continue to face the challenges of

making multiple amendments to keep pace with evolving law and practice. A structured, predictable up-to-date process is essential to maintain confidence, usability, and sector-wide consistency.

**Recommendation:**

Introduce a mandatory review cycle, ideally every three years so standing orders are refreshed prior to each local government election. Assign responsibility for minor legislative updates to an appropriate agency and confirm these can be made without triggering a full Standards NZ review, keeping costs down and complexity manageable. Establish a feedback mechanism so councils can report issues and suggest improvements between scheduled reviews.

## Removing Barriers to Access and Transparency

The copyright provisions associated with Standards NZ standing orders have historically created barriers to openness and accessibility. These restrictions have prevented councils from publishing standing orders on their websites and limited the ability to reproduce them for public use. This has led to perceptions of non-transparency and placed councils in a difficult position, balancing legal compliance with community expectations and LGA requirements for openness. While such provisions may be appropriate for most technical standards, they are not suitable for rules governing democratic processes.

**Recommendation:**

Transfer licensing responsibility to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to enable councils to publish standing orders freely and remove the need for individual licensing arrangements. This approach would ensure transparency, reduce compliance risk, and eliminate unnecessary costs for councils.

## Supporting Resources and Implementation

The current LGNZ Standing Orders Guide is a critical resource for governance professionals, providing explanations, legal options, and good practice examples that complement the standard. Its role in supporting implementation and ensuring clarity cannot be overstated. Easy access to a guide like this will help councils apply standing orders consistently and effectively.

### **Recommendation:**

Maintain and develop a Standing Orders Guide as an essential companion to the standard in partnership with Taituarā. Ensure it is freely accessible to governance professionals through integration with the Taituarā Council Toolkit currently being refreshed. Collaborate with the Department of Internal Affairs on its future development to strengthen sector-wide alignment and usability.

## Appendix 1

### Summary Table of Issues and Recommendations

Issue	Comment	Recommendation	Relevant Section
Embedding Governance Principles	Governance principles should be explicitly included to reflect local democracy values, transparency, cultural responsiveness, and compliance with Part 6 and section 39 of the LGA.	Explicitly incorporate governance principles into the standard to strengthen transparency, cultural responsiveness, and good governance practices across the sector.	Foreword and Section 1.1 – Statutory references
Sector Feedback and Council Responses	Sector feedback highlights the need for flexibility to accommodate diverse governance contexts and allow technical refinements by councils.	Ensure the final standard allows councils to incorporate technical refinements that address their unique governance needs.	Section 2.1 – Standing orders
Catering for Diversity	Standing orders must accommodate diverse governance contexts, including councils with significant Māori populations, te reo Māori headings, full translations, and emerging	Ensure the standard clearly identifies optional provisions and permits councils and boards to add non-contradictory appendices for local practices and cultural responsiveness. Maintain a single	Section 2.1.1 Standing Orders (General Provisions)

	<p>governance structures such as Combined Territorial Boards. These boards will have unique statutory responsibilities and partnership obligations, requiring flexibility within the standard. A feedback mechanism should also be included so councils can report issues and suggest improvements between scheduled reviews.</p>	<p>standard set while allowing flexibility for diverse governance arrangements and include a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement.</p>	
Ease of Use	<p>Current format is too dense and technical for real-time meeting environments. Governance advisers need clear, accessible, and practical standing orders with tailored versions for different local bodies.</p>	<p>Adopt a user-friendly design that prioritises clarity and accessibility and produce tailored versions for each type of local authority to ensure relevance and ease of application.</p>	<p>Foreword and Contents</p>
Regular Review for Legislative Alignment	<p>Without a structured review cycle, standing orders risk becoming outdated and inconsistent. A</p>	<p>Introduce a mandatory review cycle—ideally every three years—so standing orders are refreshed prior</p>	<p>Review of standards</p>

	<p>predictable update process is essential to maintain confidence and usability.</p>	<p>to each local government election. Assign responsibility for minor legislative updates to an appropriate agency and confirm these can be made without triggering a full review.</p>	
<p>Removing Barriers to Access and Transparency</p>	<p>Copyright restrictions have historically prevented councils from publishing standing orders, creating barriers to openness and compliance.</p>	<p>Transfer licensing responsibility to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to enable councils to publish standing orders freely and remove the need for individual licensing arrangements.</p>	<p>Copyright section</p>



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