

28 March 2025

Christchurch City Council  
53 Hereford Street  
Christchurch 8013

Dear Councillors

### **SUBMISSION ON THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26**

On behalf of Business Canterbury, I welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the Christchurch City Council Draft Annual Plan 2025/26.

Business Canterbury prepared a substantive submission on the Council's Long Term Plan last year, so will limit comments on this Draft Annual Plan to the issues below:

1. Nobody will tell you to cut services, but there are some decisions that need to be made by the Council on behalf of ratepayers with the primary aim of keeping rates rises at sustainable levels. For example, don't spend \$200,000 on a scoping study to reinstate a central city shuttle – just trial it. Hire a bus and put it outside the Art Centre for a month and see how many people use it and how much they are willing to pay.
2. Businesses continue to face larger rates rises than households, which when coupled with a rates differential of 2.2 times the value of household rates means businesses continue to raise questions about value for money. And rightly so. When compared with other districts around the country – our rates costs can be significantly higher for comparable commercial properties.
3. If businesses continue to pay more – their contribution needs to be recognised and weighted accordingly when decisions are made.
4. Compliance costs can be severely limiting for businesses and are particularly frustrating when they are disproportionate to the outcomes desired by businesses and by councils. One way the Council could deliver considerably more value to businesses is around consenting. In a recent submission to the Council, a few very good examples of consenting not working well and getting in the way of growth included it taking seven months to get a building consent to build an 8m<sup>2</sup> extension, and another where it cost \$16,500 to get a building consent for a \$5,000 partition wall.
5. While I do think our city is much better than any other in New Zealand – sometimes there is the perception that this is despite the Christchurch City Council, not because of it (an example being the Council re-writing a 30-year transport strategy – 16 years early). This is not to say that over time since the original plan was developed things have not changed. However, there is care required by the Council that it doesn't try to boil the ocean with these projects and fail to appropriately consult on and appreciate the views of the businesses impacted – ultimately creating uncertainty about continuing to invest in our thriving CBD.
6. The Climate Resilience Fund was something we supported in principle last year – but I would like to take the opportunity again to reiterate the importance of protecting the most important council assets first – namely economic enabling assets like the Port of Lyttelton – which we are reliant on to sustainably grow into the future.
7. My understanding of the fund is that it will be governed by elected members which is counter to our advice to ensure that it was geared up for the long-term outcomes (i.e. beyond the terms of any elected members) and that tough decisions about funding – which will inevitably occur – are not pushed to the side because of short term political thinking and risk.

8. We welcome the thinking by the Council to look at disposing of the property assets no longer fit-for-purpose or where better outcomes can be achieved outside of council ownership. This should be done quickly – with further application of these disposal principles for other capital/assets owned by the Council.

Thank you for considering our submission, which we look forward to presenting to in more detail at the hearings next month.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leeann Watson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leeann Watson  
Chief Executive Officer | Business Canterbury

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