

14 October 2025

██████████  
Sent via email to ██████████

## **LG25-0280 - Chief Executive Recruitment Process**

Dear ████████,

### **REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL INFORMATION – PARTIAL RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

Thank you for your request for information held by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). On 20 September 2025 you requested the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA):

**Regarding the appointment of a new Chief Executive, I ask for:**

- 1. A copy of the agreed job description for the [Chief Executive] position.**
- 2. A list of the recruitment companies approached to undertake the search process [for the Chief Executive position] and assist with the appointment.**
- 3. An outline of the process used to determine the preferred [recruitment] company, explaining the delegated authority that was used.**
- 4. Confirmation of who signed the contract with the preferred recruitment company, and what delegated authority was used to authorise this signature.**

### **QLDC RESPONSE**

#### **Partial release of information**

In response to your request, we consulted with the QLDC People and Capability Team.

- 3. An outline of the process used to determine the preferred [recruitment] company, explaining the delegated authority that was used.**

The procurement of a recruitment agency—distinct from the Chief Executive appointment itself—was initiated by QLDC’s Director of People and Capability. This action was taken under delegated authority and aligned with the process communicated to Councillors following Chief Executive Mike Theelen’s formal notification, under the Local Government Act, of his decision not to seek reappointment at the end of his term. Engaging a specialist recruiter in advance ensures that the substantive recruitment process can commence promptly once the new Council is in place, helping to minimise any gap between the outgoing and incoming Chief Executive.

A limited procurement approach was used, with QLDC inviting proposals from specialist firms listed on either the All-of-Government panel or QLDC’s own recruitment panel. Due to the seniority of the

role, only agencies with proven experience and a strong track record in executive recruitment were considered. This method ensured that a suitable agency was secured and ready to support the incoming Council following the election.

**4. Confirmation of who signed the contract with the preferred recruitment company, and what delegated authority was used to authorise this signature.**

The contract with the selected recruitment agency was signed by the QLDC Director of People and Capability (DPC), acting under DPC delegated authority.

**Decision to refuse information**

**1. A copy of the agreed job description for the [Chief Executive] position.**

We have good reason under section 17(e) of the LGOIMA for refusing the information requested. We consider it is necessary to refuse the requested information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 17(e) – that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Section 17(e) of the LGOIMA provides that a local authority is not required to release information that does not exist or cannot be located despite reasonable efforts. In this case, QLDC has undertaken reasonable steps to locate the agreed job description for the Chief Executive position; however, this document has not yet been created.

The recruitment process for the Chief Executive role has not yet commenced. At this stage, only the procurement of a third-party recruitment agency has been completed. It has always been intended that the appointment process will be led by the incoming Council. A specialist executive recruitment agency has been engaged through standard procurement procedures and will work alongside the new Council to define the role and expectations for the Chief Executive. Recruitment and selection are expected to begin later this year, with the aim of completing the appointment prior to the current Chief Executive's departure to ensure a smooth transition.

Accordingly, while QLDC remains committed to providing access to the information it holds, the specific documentation requested does not exist and therefore cannot be provided, in accordance with section 17(e) of the LGOIMA.

**Decision to withhold information**

**2. A list of the recruitment companies approached to undertake the search process [for the Chief Executive position] and assist with the appointment.**

We have good reason under section 7(2)(b)(ii) of the LGOIMA for withholding the requested information. We consider it is necessary to withhold this information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 7(2)(b) - the withholding of the information is necessary to protect information where the making available of the information—

- (ii) would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

Section 7(2)(b)(ii) of the LGOIMA allows for the withholding of information where its release would be likely to unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of the person or entity who supplied it or who is the subject of the information.

This section is intended to protect commercially sensitive information, particularly where disclosure could undermine competitive advantage, compromise future business opportunities, or affect the reputation of the parties involved. In this case, the list of recruitment companies approached during the procurement process contains commercially sensitive details that, if disclosed, could unreasonably impact the commercial interests of those providers.

Council has carefully considered whether the public interest in releasing this information outweighs the need to protect the confidentiality of the entities involved. It has been determined that the public interest does not reach a threshold sufficient to justify disclosure. The procurement process was conducted in accordance with Council's standard procedures, and transparency around the final appointment will be maintained through appropriate channels.

Accordingly, the information remains withheld under section 7(2)(b)(ii) of the LGOIMA to preserve the integrity of commercial operations and maintains confidence in Council's procurement practices.

### **Public interest considerations**

In assessing whether to withhold information, QLDC carefully evaluates the public interest—particularly whether disclosure would enhance transparency, accountability, or informed public engagement. This assessment includes weighing those benefits against the potential harm that could result from releasing the information.

QLDC acknowledges the public interest in ensuring transparency and accountability among local authority members and officials and supports the principles of good governance. We remain committed to releasing information wherever appropriate. However, in this instance, the potential for unreasonable prejudice to the commercial position of the parties involved outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Therefore, QLDC has determined that section 7(2)(b)(ii) of the LGOIMA applies. The release of the requested information would likely cause undue harm to the commercial interests of the parties concerned, and no overriding public interest has been identified that would justify its disclosure.

### **Right to review the above decision**

Note that you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about this process is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please contact [Naell.Crosby-Roe@qldc.govt.nz](mailto:Naell.Crosby-Roe@qldc.govt.nz) (Director Democracy Services).

We trust that the above information satisfactorily answers your request.

Kind regards,

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