

# MINUTES (in Review)

## CANTERBURY MAYORAL FORUM



<b>Name:</b>	Canterbury Mayoral Forum
<b>Date:</b>	Friday, 29 May 2026
<b>Time:</b>	8:30 am to 12:49 pm (NZST)
<b>Location:</b>	Commodore Hotel, 449 Memorial Avenue, Burnside, Christchurch
<b>Board Members:</b>	Nigel Bowen (Chair), Marie Black, Craig Rowley, Craig Mackle, Dan Gordon, Dr Deon Swiggs, Liz McMillan, Lydia Gliddon, Melanie Tavendale, Phil Mauger, Scott Aronsen
<b>Attendees:</b>	Justin Tipa, Tania Wati, Alex Parmley, Angela Oosthuizen, Bede Carran, Ben Bateman, Hamish Dobbie, Hamish Riach, Jeff Millward, Nigel Trainor, Steve Gibling, Maree McNeilly, Amelia Wilkins
<b>Apologies:</b>	Dr Stefanie Rixecker, Will Doughty, Stuart Duncan, Ann Fitzgerald
<b>Guests/Notes:</b>	David Perenara-O'Connell for Stefanie Rixecker; Peter Kearney for Will Doughty; Deputy Mayors Vicki Gulleford, Fiona Harris, Philip Redmond, Victoria Heystock, Big Red Shefford, Richard Wilson, Scott Shannon, Sandy McAlwee, Rit Fisher; apologies from Rebecca Ryan & Iaeen Cranwell (Item 2.1); Jeremy Lightfoot (MCERT), Sarah Polaschek, Hemi Smiler, (DIA) (Item 2.1); apology from Dianne McDermott (Item 5.1); Jesse Burgess (Items 6.2, 6.3, 6.4)

### 1. Open Meeting

#### 1.1 Welcome, karakia and apologies

The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting and invited Justin Tipa to open the meeting with a karakia.

Apologies were noted from Dr Stefanie Rixecker, Will Doughty, Stuart Duncan, Deputy Chair Iaeen Cranwell, Deputy Mayor Rebecca Ryan, with David Perenara-O'Connell for Dr Stefanie Rixecker and Pete Kearney for Will Doughty.

Carmin Beck and Georgia Weaver assisted the Secretariat as Ann Fitzgerald was on apology.

#### 1.2 Confirmation of agenda

The agenda was confirmed as presented and no items of general business were raised.

#### 1.3 Minutes from the previous meeting

**Canterbury Mayoral Forum 20 Feb 2026**, the minutes were confirmed as presented.

The minutes were confirmed as presented.



#### Decision

The minutes were confirmed as presented

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Dan Gordon  
**Seconder:** Marie Black  
**Outcome:** Approved

## 1.4 Action List

Due Date	Action Title	Owner(s)
30 Jun 2025	Action <b>Status:</b> On Hold	Maree McNeilly
30 Jun 2025	Action <b>Status:</b> On Hold	Nigel Bowen
27 Apr 2026	Action <b>Status:</b> Not Started	Hamish Dobbie, Maree McNeilly

## 2. For Discussion

### 2.1 Local Government reform

The Chair welcomed Jeremy Lightfoot, Chief Executive of the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions, and Transport (MCERT), Hemi Smiler and Sarah Polaschek, from Department of Internal Affairs, and the deputy mayors.

MCERT is gearing up to become a new organization and understand the role it will play. The organisation will undergo a two-step process; the first moving existing staff and roles under five executive leaders into the new organisation, the second will be a transition to an organisational design which supports successful delivery.

The importance of relationships and connections were emphasised to enable collaboration and crucial partnerships. Change provides many opportunities and it will be a balance to continue to introducing change coherently and at pace.

CMF members raised the following questions/points around:

- the sequencing of the Resource Management reform, along with Local Government reform, especially concerning the geographical scope of the Spatial Plan
- whether there have been funds appropriated for Councils to use for court cases related to resource management reform

The representatives from Department of Internal Affairs shared information about the Head Start pathway. Information was shared about an upcoming guidance document on the Head Start proposal process, covering eligibility to submit, the balance of criteria and trade-offs, and the process for applications post submission.

It was noted that the Head Start pathway is only for councils proposing unitary solutions (other proposed structures to be considered in the backstop approach). The importance of including the areas of consensus between the parties in a proposal submission was highlighted, as well as areas which require further resolution. It was emphasised that a submission should be the "best foot forward."

It was noted that the proposal process was designed to be regionally and locally led.

There was a robust conversation between the meeting participants, with the following points emerging:

- It is possible for a single district to be proposed as a unitary, but it would require the support in the broader regional context and depend on how criteria are weighed (unknown at the moment).
- Catchment management is important.
- A proposal can be made to change regional boundaries but it's recommended to present a clear case on why it is appropriate as well as support from both regions.

- There was concern over the BAU requirement to continue with LTP processes. There have been signals that central government is investigating how to support councils – potentially legislative change post-election to support an “LTP Light” in the 1-3 year range.
- Looking at spatial plan boundaries, it puts additional financial and resource pressure on councils who straddle regional lines. The complexity of the situations in Waitaki, Waimate, and Kaikōura were acknowledged.
- In September, Cabinet is expected to confirm who is in the Head Start pathway, with the remaining districts confirmed in May 2027. At this stage there are just the two pathways of Head Start or backstop, but it is always a possibility that additional pathways are introduced. It is unclear whether there is room for negotiation if a Head Start application is not accepted. The Head Start pathway is voluntary. Regardless of what happens, there will not be regional councillors after 2028 and Mayors will have to govern regional functions, although it is possible the mayors could be supplemented or replaced by commissioners.
- Those accepted into Head Start will get primary legislation and backstop applications will have to consider that existing legislative framework.
- The confusion around unwilling partners was acknowledged.
- There were questions regarding central government funding for both the Head Start and backstop processes, with the answer that there was likely no financial support available in either process and that both pathways were expecting to be led at the regional and local levels.
- An important consideration for rates capping is setting up an organisation to be financially sustainable, so there is room for negotiation on what rates capping could look like or when it would start. This consideration should be included in the Head Start application.
- In the situation where a sub-regional unitary is accepted into the Head Start pathway, the broader region will still require delivery of regional responsibilities until the backstop process is complete.
- There isn't a rate-payer base threshold to unitary size as long as the organisation is financially sustainable.
- There is no explicit indication where other Government parties sit on this work.
- It was suggested that unitaries in a region could minimise duplication by sharing responsibilities (e.g. one does catchment for the region, and another does something else). This could be addressed in a Head Start proposal.
- It was recommended to approach the Head Start proposal to communicate what success looks like for the councils and people of Canterbury; articulate what success looks like in the executive summary on the front page.
- It was noted that some currently regional functions would be better suited across the South Island as a whole (e.g. natural hazard events) and recommended that, putting forward ideas to government, ensure strong cases behind them.
- The second spatial plan will include unitaries.
- Frame Head Start proposals as opportunities to improve.

#### Reflections around the table included:

- Interest in a collective Head Start proposal – need a strong collective proposal which shows collaboration with our neighbours and is too strong to oppose. United front to avoid fracturing communities (e.g. Three Waters).
- Need to work collaboratively on what will be best for Canterbury as a collective in the long-term, create a sense of belonging
- Opportunities

- to unlock rural potential, if democracy is set up well; must avoid situation which leads to community boards without real power
- to reinvigorate local government
- for economy of scale for smaller districts
- to show leadership of collaboration to the entire country
- How to best support those at the urban fringe around Ōtautahi Christchurch
- Approach a Head Start proposal from the perspective of what will strengthen regional capability and protect/enhance local voice
- The importance of catchments
- Show timeframe to make decisions and create document; engineer 1-3 options to table together
- Lack of community input is a huge risk
- Encouraging a strong approach for future generations
- We all want the same things – how do we get there?

CMF members expressed gratitude to Jeremy, Hemi, and Sarah for the clear and candid information.

Jeremy, Hemi, and Sarah left the meeting at 11:03am.

There was discussion around the table on how to proceed. The regional council offered support from the internal Strategic Transition Unit as well as any data required to assist with decision making. Resourcing is an issue, especially for smaller councils, and many councils have employed contractors to assist with the groundwork. This presents an opportunity to ensure they are working from the same information and challenges to avoid duplication.



#### Action

The Chief Executives to come up with some proposals for discussion by the Mayoral Forum.

**Due Date:** 11 Jun 2026  
**Owner:** Hamish Dobbie



#### Action

Set up a facilitated meeting of the CMF and deputy mayors on Friday, 12 June to discuss a collective Head Start proposal.

**Due Date:** 12 Jun 2026  
**Owner:** Maree McNeilly



#### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the key points from the Simplifying Local Government: Head Start pathway released on 5 May 2026
2. agreed in principle to progress a Head Start proposal for Canterbury to meet the Government's deadline of 9 August 2026

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026  
**Mover:** Dan Gordon  
**Second:** Melanie Tavendale  
**Outcome:** Approved

### 3. KAI - Morning tea

#### 3.1 Kai - morning tea

### 4. For discussion and decision

#### 4.1 Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan

The Chair invited the deputy mayors to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

Hamish Dobbie introduced the paper and summarised the work that has been done in relation to the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan as well as the options in the paper. The plan is an enabling inspirational document which will also be used as a regulatory instrument.

Mayor Forum members discussed regional versus sub-regional governance for a Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee. There was also discussion around how to balance council representation, mana whenua representation, a government appointee and specialists. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu requested keeping the mana whenua delegation to 3-5 skilled governors who will vote on behalf of the ten Papatipu Rūnanga.

There was also discussion around wording the Terms of Reference (TOR) so that each council could choose their representative and that the TOR be updated to reflect that the Independent Chair and Ministerial Representative will have non-voting roles unless legislatively required.



#### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. agreed to establish the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee
2. agreed the recommended governance option of representation from each council, mana whenua, central government appointments, and an independent chair
3. agreed to seek endorsement from each council for the recommended option for the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee, as part of the Process Agreement for the Regional Spatial Plan required under the Planning Bill
4. agreed to the urgent establishment of an Independent Programme Director noting the offer from the Greater Christchurch Partnership to provide some capacity and capability to this function in the interim period
5. agreed to host the independent Regional Spatial Plan Programme Director, the associated programme management office and secretariat at Christchurch City Council
6. noted the indicative cost of \$7-10 million, which is a very early estimate and includes a level of councils' current resources and budgets
7. noted that further refinement of the budget and funding options still need to be worked through
8. agreed that all Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan work should proceed on a no-regrets basis, that will remain relevant under future institutional arrangements
9. noted the interaction between spatial planning, resource management reform and local government reform and associated risks.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026  
**Mover:** Nigel Bowen  
**Seconded:** Marie Black  
**Outcome:** Approved

## 4.2 Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2026-2028

Hamish Dobbie introduced the paper on the draft Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2026-28 and associated 'elevator pitch' and updated World-stage ready. The Plan outlines three priority areas and ten actions for the Forum's advocacy, leadership and collaboration.

There was a discussion around the importance of the 'elevator pitch' directing audiences to the Plan and World-stage ready. Mayor Gliddon provided an update to the draft for the elevator pitch, which members agreed with.



### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. approved the final draft Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2026–2028, and delegated final approval for any minor changes to the Chair of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum for approval
2. approved the updated Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury elevator pitch and delegated final approval for any minor changes to the Chair of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum for approval
3. noted the updates to Waitaha Canterbury World-stage Ready

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Dan Gordon

**Seconder:** Marie Black

**Outcome:** Approved

## 5. For discussion

### 5.1 Regional Public Service Commissioner

Diane McDermott was an apology for the meeting

## 6. For discussion and decision

### 6.1 Canterbury Water Management Strategy update

Dr Deon Swiggs introduced the paper and led a discussion on whether there was a commitment from members to the establishment of the Local Leadership Groups. There were mixed opinions around the table; with some noting invigorated community involvement and others noting no loss in services since the Zone Committees were disestablished.

The Forum has requested that a paper to come back to the August Mayoral Forum meeting to provide advice about the CWMS and the local leadership groups in the context of the current reforms.



### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the update for January to March 2026 on work underway to implement the Canterbury Water Management Strategy
2. requested a further report on the context of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy in light of Simplifying Local Government and Resource Management reform progress, including the impact on local communities.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Craig Rowley

**Seconded:** Liz McMillan  
**Outcome:** Approved

## 6.2 Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan update

Dan Gordon introduced the paper, with Jesse Burgess, Convener Climate Change Working Group, in attendance to support the discussion.

It was reported that implementation of the Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan is progressing well, especially noting collaboration across Action 2: Emissions Reduction with the Energy Workstream and regional transport work, and emphasising the need for continuity over the multi-year programme.

Concerns were raised from members about the budget, and whether year 3 funding is required given the request to rollover Year 2 funding into Year 3, and the current underspend in the context of large scale reform and need to manage rates increases responsibly. Members requested assurance that work and funding are prioritised appropriately, and a signal of what the work would look like if Year 3 funding was not granted.

Members noted the Strategic Review, which assesses whether current CCPP actions remain relevant, appropriately prioritised, and aligned with legislative changes, national direction, funding and staff resource availability, will be presented with recommendations in August and respond to the concerns raised with respect to budget requirements.



### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. approved the draft strategic framework for the Low Emissions Transition Plan (Action 2)
2. noted the completion of the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment for Waitaha Canterbury's Ecosystems (sub-action 4.1), and that this will be published on the Canterbury Mayoral Forum website
3. received the quarterly Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan implementation progress report and accompanying budget summary for quarter 3, year 2
4. approved the carry forward of \$519,724 from the year 2 CCPP budget (FY 25/26) to year 3 (FY 26/27)
5. agreed to maintain the planned council contributions for year 3 (FY 26/27), totalling \$540,143, subject to the outcome of the strategic review to be presented at the August 2026 Mayoral Forum meeting
6. noted the outcomes and recommendations of the strategic review will be reported to the August Mayoral Forum meeting.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026  
**Mover:** Dan Gordon  
**Seconded:** Nigel Bowen  
**Outcome:** Approved

## 6.3 Regional Energy Workstream update

Hamish Riach presented the Energy Workstream paper, with Jesse Burgess, Chair Regional Energy Steering Group, in attendance to support the discussion.

The project is on pace and within funding to produce a draft action plan by the end of the financial year, which can be finalised with in-house resources. It was noted the level of stakeholder and mana whenua engagement with this project has been significant, with many stakeholders invested in how the work will be implemented.

The role of the energy workstream as a key informer of the spatial plan was underlined as well as the importance of critical cross sector conversations to join up work.



## Action

Jesse Burgess to investigate whether there has been engagement with the Canterbury Engineering Lifelines Group.

**Due Date:** 7 Jul 2026

**Owner:** Regional Forums Secretariat



## Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. endorsed the revised Regional Energy Strategic Framework and supporting report, noting that further refinements may arise from ongoing engagement with mana whenua
2. provided any feedback on the revised Regional Energy Strategic Framework and supporting report, by 12 June 2026
3. noted that a Scope of Work for the Regional Energy Action Plan / Roadmap has been developed, with the draft Action Plan / Roadmap scheduled for delivery by June 2026
4. noted that targeted engagement with stakeholders, mana whenua and community groups is ongoing
5. noted that the final Regional Energy Strategic Framework and Regional Energy Action Plan / Roadmap will be brought back to the Canterbury Mayoral Forum for consideration and approval in the second half of 2026.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Nigel Bower

**Seconder:** Liz McMillan

**Outcome:** Approved

## 6.4 Canterbury Regional Deal update

Hamish Riach introduced the paper with Jesse Burgess, Regional Deal Working Group, in attendance to support the discussion.

An analysis of the Western Bay of Plenty (Tauranga) and Auckland regional deals show that the deals build on existing collaboration and governance mechanisms and setting out expectations around working together over the next 10 years. Neither deal rules out government investment and support for complementary initiatives in other regions.

The Canterbury regional deal work is building an evidence base that will support future conversations around transport, energy, infrastructure, innovation, and housing, and is being undertaken with in-kind resources from the Economic Development Forum members.



## Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the update on progress for the development of a scope of works for a regional deal proposal
2. agreed to progress steps 1-5 of phase 1 of the scope of work with working group in-kind resources, as they are available
3. noted staff analysis of the Auckland and Western Bay of Plenty Deals and their implications for this work.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Dan Gordon

**Seconder:** Phil Mauger

**Outcome:** Approved

## 6.5 Chief Executives Forum report

This paper was taken as read.



### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. received the quarterly report from the Chief Executives Forum.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Nigel Bowen

**Seconder:** Marie Black

**Outcome:** Approved

## 7. For information

### 7.1 Activities and Engagements February - May 2026

This paper was taken as read.



### Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. received the update on Canterbury Mayoral Forum activities, engagements and correspondence since the Forum's last meeting on 20 February 2026.

**Decision Date:** 29 May 2026

**Mover:** Craig Rowley

**Seconder:** Craig Mackle

**Outcome:** Approved

## 8. General business

### 8.1 General business

There were no items of general business.

### 8.2 Meeting review

The Mayoral Forum discussed the wording of the upcoming press release.

The deputy mayors thanked the forum for the invitation to attend future Mayoral Forum simplifying local government meetings was extended to Deputies



### Action

Secretariat to contact Ministers Bishop /Watts offices to schedule meetings to present a Head Start proposal to Ministers.

**Due Date:** 30 Jun 2026

**Owner:** Regional Forums Secretariat

### 8.3 Closing karakia

The meeting was closed with a karakia by the Chair.

9. Kai - lunch

**9.1 Lunch**

10. Close Meeting

**10.1 Close the meeting**

**Next meeting:** Canterbury Mayoral Forum - 28 Aug 2026, 8:30 am

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Unconfirmed draft