MINUTES (in Review)

CANTERBURY MAYORAL FORUM

Name:	Canterbury Mayoral Forum
Date:	Friday, 20 November 2026
Time:	8:30 am to 12:30 pm (NZDT)
Location:	Commodore Hotel, 449 Memorial Avenue, Burnside, Christchurch
Board Members:	Nigel Bowen (Chair), Marie Black, Craig Rowley, Craig Mackle, Dan Gordon, Dr Deon Swiggs, Liz McMillan, Lydia Gliddon, Melanie Tavendale, Phil Mauger
Attendees:	Tania Wati, Hamish Dobbie, Alex Parmley, Angela Oosthuizen, Hamish Riach, Jeff Millward, Nigel Trainor, Will Doughty, Steve Gibling, Dylan Murray, Bede Carran , Maree McNeilly, Amelia Wilkins, Ann Fitzgerald
Apologies:	Scott Aronsen, Ben Bateman, Justin Tipa, Dr Stefanie Rixecker
Guests/Notes:	Nadeine Dommisse, Executive Leader Planning System Reform, MCERT (Item 3.1); Hemi Smiler, General Manager Local Government Reform and Deals, MCERT (Item 5.1); Marie Ward, Director Regional Public Service Commission (Item 5.2); Councillor Sophie McInnes, Chair Biodiversity Champions (Item 6.2); Jesse Burgess Canterbury Regional Council (Items 6.3; 6.4; 6.5)

unconfirmed draft

1. Open Meeting

1.1 Welcome, karakia and apologies

The Chair opened the meeting with a karakia and noted apologies from Ben Bateman, Scott Aronsen, Justin Tipa and Dr Stefanie Rixecker. Apologies for lateness from Phil Mauger, and early departure from Dan Gordon were noted.

1.2 Confirmation of agenda

The agenda was confirmed as presented, with no items of general business.

1.3 Minutes from the previous meeting

Canterbury Mayoral Forum 28 Aug 2026, the minutes were confirmed as presented.

Decision

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2026 were confirmed as presented.

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Melanie Tavendale
Seconder:	Liz McMillan
Outcome:	Approved

1.4 Action List

Due Date	Action Title	Owner(s)
28 Sept 2026	Action **Status:** In Progress	Dr Deon Swiggs

2. For discussion and decision

2.1 Central Government engagement

The Forum discussed its approach to engaging with Central Government following the general election.

There was support for a single, coherent Canterbury story, as outlined in the existing elevator pitch and aligned with other regional advocacy, including Business Canterbury's work, Canterbury Regional Council's Commit to Canterbury advocacy material and and council work already underway, including identifying common themes, opportunities and the resulting regional asks.

The importance of presenting collective regional priorities, avoiding fragmented or competing messages, and identifying targeted asks that can be advanced with pace once the new government is formed was acknowledged.

Transport funding, wider infrastructure investment, funding and financing tools for local government, flood resilience, and workforce capability were identified as central themes.

The Forum also discussed the value of stronger coordination with mana whenua, the private sector and potentially wider South Island interests to strengthen advocacy and improve influence with ministers and Members of Parliament.

unconfirmed draft

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:
1. discussed and agreed on the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's approach for engaging with Central Government

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Marie Black
Seconder:	Phil Mauger
Outcome:	Approved

Action

Prepare draft concise advocacy one-pagers that begin with the specific ask and then set out the supporting narrative and national benefit for Canterbury priorities for Mayoral Forum approval

Due Date:	20 Dec 2026
Owner:	Maree McNeilly

3. For discussion

3.1 New Zealand's new planning system

The Forum received an update from Nadeine Dommisse, Executive Leader Planning System Reform, Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) on the formation of MCERT and the new planning system.

Discussion included:

- MCERT has been created with the intention of being a single agency that can pull across its multiple levers to support local government to achieve shared goals. The organisation is working through its structural change now
- the formation of MCERT and establishment of a new planning system presents an opportunity for central and local government to work together more cohesively
- existing spatial planning puts Canterbury in a good position, albeit that there are varying levels of plan maturity across the region
- reiterating that regional spatial planning is designed to be more strategic than district plans, and that first-generation plans particularly, cannot be everything to everyone
- need to avoid replicating former Resource Management Act planning approaches that were more complex
- MCERT is giving consideration to effect the change of culture that is required
- MCERT will create guidance on the minimum requirements for the first regional spatial plan to support councils to set appropriate expectations
- the need for a suitably mandated central government appointee, regular communication from the ministry as national policy direction develops, and support that enables Canterbury to use a coordinated regional voice across planning, transport and local government reform
- crown appointee to the RSP Committee needs to have sufficient mana and a focus that is broader than technical planning. Nadeine invited the Mayoral Forum to discuss and recommend options for the crown appointee for the government's consideration
- the need for clearer national direction, minimum viable expectations for first-generation regional spatial plans, and practical guidance on standards, sequencing and digital tools
- capacity, capability and cost pressures across councils were raised as significant implementation risks
- the establishment of regional spatial planning arrangements, the interaction between planning reform and other government reforms, and the need for national consistency, practical guidance and realistic implementation support were noted
- Canterbury requires clarity on sequencing, standards, digital readiness, governance arrangements and the intended scale of first-generation regional spatial plans so that councils can progress the work proportionately and strategically
- Nadeine noted that the national direction through national policy and standards would be developed with input from local government staff, and through the process those staff will be able to keep local government aware of what can be expected when the national policy statements and standards are published.

Unconfirmed draft

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. received the information provided in the presentation on New Zealand’s new planning system.

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Dr Deon Swiggs
Seconder:	Marie Black
Outcome:	Approved

4. KAI - Morning tea

4.1 Kai - morning tea

5. For discussion

5.1 Simplifying Local Government

The Forum received an update from Hemi Smiler, Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport, on the Simplifying Local Government programme.

Hemi opened with acknowledgement of the significant effort Canterbury councils put into the Head Start proposals and reiterated the Government's pre-election announcement that the process has been paused until the new Government is stood up.

Subject to decisions of the incoming government, MCERT is continuing its programme of work and is still looking at changes to local government, including regional councillors to be removed by 2028, full change of local government in place by 2031 local body elections, and working with councils in three particular areas (financial sustainability, community representation, and regional council functions).

MCERT provided feedback on the Canterbury Head Start proposals received. Overall, each proposal offered viable options for consideration, demonstrating areas that would likely benefit from scale, asset management, transport planning, regulation. All proposals highlighted the importance of maintaining local voice.

The missing piece in the Canterbury proposals was a collective view on regional functions, and the different drivers for amalgamating (eg. catchment/environment, communities, services). The proposals did not talk to how these would be addressed in detailed design.

In response to the question whether there were any standout applications across the country that could support Canterbury to mature the conversation, the answer was that they all need some further work. MCERT will release an assessment matrix and commentary once approved by the new Government.

There was discussion on the membership of the sector group that had been pulled together to discuss how best for MCERT to engage with the sector. Concerns were highlighted around any perception of working in secret (which was not the intent) and recommended the need for transparent conversations and no surprises. It was suggested to Hemi that MCERT seek input from the Mayoral Forum for nominations for any future groups, to ensure transparency.

The key message from MCERT at that time is for councils to focus on progressing regional spatial planning and Long Term Plans.

unconfirmed draft

Decison

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum received the verbal update from MCERT on Simplifying Local Government.

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Liz McMillan
Seconder:	Nigel Bowen
Outcome:	Approved

5.2 Regional Public Service Commissioner

Marie Ward joined the meeting for this item, noting that Diane McDermott is an apology for the meeting.

An update on the Regional Public Commissioner workstreams was provided:

- children and youth attendance initiatives, multi-agency response, majority of cases are able to be closed, or are being actively worked through, some work exploring reduction of youth crime
- economic development and workforce skills work through the Economic Development Forum

- housing and homelessness initiatives, particularly in Christchurch. The Forum highlighted the need for support services to be available in communities outside of Christchurch
- continued in-kind resource provided for the Mayoral Forum's energy workstream
- El Niño - bringing together agencies (online) across Otago/Southland to prepare for extreme weather events The RPSC would be happy to offer this for Canterbury.

Regional Leadership Group meetings - Hamish Riach and Steve Gibling attend on behalf of the Mayoral Forum. Nadeine Dommisse, MCERT, will attend the November meeting.

The Forum discussed the importance of ensuring regional issues are not viewed solely through a Christchurch lens and supported the use of district-level data, rather than Canterbury only data, to better reflect conditions across Canterbury.

Following recent reports of testing penguins for H5N1 in Kaikōura, an update on avian influenza status and current actions was requested.

Action

Regional Public Service Commissioner to provide an update to the Mayoral Forum on H5N1 avian influenza.

Due Date: 20 Jan 2027
Owner: Maree McNeilly

unconfirmed draft

6. For discussion and decision

6.1 Canterbury Water Management Strategy

Deon Swiggs presented the paper, noting the quarterly update on work underway to implement the Canterbury Water Management Strategy, in particular progress on establishing local leadership groups where this has been requested, and the work recently undertaken to consolidate the 2030 goals.

Discussion included:

- differing levels of council support for progressing local leadership groups
- resourcing pressures on smaller councils
- concerns about the complexity of the wider planning landscape, including the relationship between CWMS, regional spatial planning, climate, water and energy planning. Members questioned whether a broader conversation on the strategic principles underpinning these frameworks may be required, particularly in light of anticipated Government policy announcements and future reviews. A review of the CWMS has been paused until next year when the Government has set policy in place to guide next steps
- members confirmed preference for the CWMS to remain under the oversight of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum and agreed that opportunities for further stakeholder engagement on the revised goals should be explored.

Recommendation 2 - endorsement of the consolidated 2030 goals - was deferred to the February meeting pending Canterbury Regional Council 'closing the loop' on feedback with partners.

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the quarterly update on work underway to implement the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and recent progress in establishing local leadership groups.

Decision Date: 20 Nov 2026
Mover: Lydia Gliddon

Seconder: Nigel Bowen
Outcome: Approved

Action

'Closing the loop' with CWMS partners on the feedback received from councils, partners and local leadership groups on the proposed consolidated 2030 Canterbury Water Management Strategy goals, including feedback raised by the Canterbury Mayoral Forum.

Due Date: 20 Dec 2026
Owner: Dr Deon Swiggs

6.2 Canterbury Biodiversity Champions

Councillor Sophie McInnes, Chair Canterbury Biodiversity Champions and Councillor, Selwyn District Council joined the meeting to present the update on the Canterbury Biodiversity Champions since the group was reinstatement in November 2025.

This includes the updated biodiversity stocktake and emerging areas of regional alignment. Councillor McInnes specifically noted the implicit support for cross-boundary and collaborative plans, and the intention to avoid doubling up on work or working at cross-purposes. The group has concerns about the impact on biodiversity outcomes with the reshaping of local government, and particularly regional council functions.

Members confirmed support for the group's role in providing elected-member leadership, coordination and advice on biodiversity matters, while not directing operational work. The Forum also noted discussion about cross-boundary coordination, engagement with landowners and mana whenua, and the potential implications of local government reform for biodiversity outcomes.

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the overview of work undertaken by the Canterbury Biodiversity Champions since its reinstatement in November 2025
2. noted the updated council biodiversity stocktake, and the emerging areas of alignment outlined in this paper
3. approved the updated Terms of Reference for the Canterbury Biodiversity Champions councillor group for the 2025–28 local government term.

Decision Date: 20 Nov 2026
Mover: Lydia Gliddon
Seconder: Craig Mackle
Outcome: Approved

6.3 Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan

The paper was taken as read, noting that Year 3 delivery is progressing on time and within budget.

Work includes development of the Resilience Explorer pilot, preparation of the Waitaha Canterbury Transition to Low-Emissions Plan, completion of the situational analysis for adaptation planning, and commencement of procurement for the blue-green network plan.

There was discussion on how future implementation and funding would be addressed beyond the current planning period and how relevant workstreams connect with regional spatial planning. The Climate Change Working Group will discuss this at its November meeting and bring the discussion back to the Forum in February.

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

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1. noted that the Resilience Explorer tool (Action 1.1) to understand district- and region-wide climate risks is in development
2. approved the proposed initiatives to be included in the Waitaha Canterbury Transition to Low-Emissions Plan (Action 2)
3. noted the implementation approach for the Waitaha Canterbury Transition to Low Emissions Plan was endorsed by the Canterbury Chief Executives Forum (Action 2)
4. noted the findings of the situational analysis of climate adaptation planning across Canterbury (Action 3)
5. approved the proposed Phase 2 scope for Action 3, comprising the development of principles and criteria to support councils to identify priority locations for adaptation planning
6. noted the procurement process for development of a blue-green network plan (Action 4a) is underway
7. received the quarterly Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan implementation progress report and accompanying budget summary for Year 3, quarter 1.

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Nigel Bowen
Seconder:	Craig Rowley
Outcome:	Approved

6.4 Canterbury Regional Energy Workstream

Jesse Burgess highlighted the key points in the paper.

The discussion acknowledged the substantial in-kind contribution supporting the work to date, that a modest launch is planned for early 2027, and emphasised the need for governance arrangements that enable delivery without unnecessary bureaucracy.

The terms of reference for the expanded Steering Group will need to consider appropriate authority to enable work to continue at reasonable pace. Tania Wati suggested Ngāi Tahu representation on the expanded steering group, and will advise names following internal discussions.

The Forum supported the appointment of Dr Deon Swiggs as the Regional Energy Champion and discussed the possibility of an additional champion - a mana whenua representative or another external person with appropriate networks and credibility.

Decision

That the Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted that the Regional Energy Strategic Framework has now been published on the Canterbury Mayoral Forum website, with stakeholders and partners notified by email
2. noted that a launch of the Regional Energy Framework and Action Plan is planned for early 2027
3. approved the Regional Energy Action Plan, subject to any feedback provided by Mayoral Forum members
4. delegated authority to the Energy Strategy Steering Group, in consultation with the Chair of the Economic Development Forum, to make any minor amendments to the Energy Action Plan before publication
5. supported the proposed approach to governance and leadership for implementation of the Energy Action Plan, including expansion of the Energy Strategy Steering Group
6. agreed to the appointment of a member of the Mayoral Forum as a regional energy Champion to help promote the regional energy work, build connections, and maintain momentum
7. appointed Dr Deon Swiggs as the Regional Energy Champion

unconfirmed draft

8. noted that the appointment of an additional Champion may be considered in future, particularly if an external person with the appropriate profile, networks and credibility is identified

9. noted that ongoing resourcing and funding will be required to support implementation of the Energy Action Plan, with longer-term requirements to be informed through the scoping of individual actions.

Decision Date: 20 Nov 2026
Mover: Nigel Bowen
Seconder: Marie Black
Outcome: Approved

6.5 Waitaha Canterbury Regional Investment Prospectus

Jesse Burgess briefly highlighted key points in the paper and invited questions.

The Forum discussed the importance of alignment between the investment prospectus, the Forum's advocacy, Business Canterbury's Canterbury Ambition and Briefings for Incoming Ministers. Ideally there would be some level of co-ordination and timing as briefings go out.

It was noted that the work to date had relied heavily on in-kind resource and that some specialised external support would likely be required in Phase 2 to make the prospectus market-ready.

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:
1. endorsed the draft Waitaha Canterbury Regional Investment Prospectus Phase 1 report
2. provided feedback on the next stage of work for the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Investment Prospectus
3. noted that it is expected that some external resource will be required to complete the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Investment Prospectus
4. agreed to a $10,000 contribution to support Business Canterbury's Canterbury Ambition to demonstrate commitment to alignment of the Mayoral Forum and Business Canterbury workstreams.

Decision Date: 20 Nov 2026
Mover: Nigel Bowen
Seconder: Lydia Gliddon
Outcome: Approved

6.6 Chief Executives Forum report

The Mayoral Forum acknowledged the work of the chief executives, regional forums and secretariat in progressing the Forum's regional work programme.

Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:
1. received the quarterly report from the Chief Executives Forum
2. noted the 2027 Canterbury Mayoral Forum Calendar

Decision Date: 20 Nov 2026
Mover: Nigel Bowen
Seconder: Tania Wati
Outcome: Approved

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7. For information

7.1 Activities and Engagements

The paper included a summary of recent engagement with councillors on avian influenza, correspondence with political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament, invitations for the post-meeting parliamentary lunch, and progress on submissions including the Building Amendment Bill and the forthcoming submission on the Local Government (Rates Capping) Amendment Bill.

The 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 28 August 2026.

Decision Date:	20 Nov 2026
Mover:	Marie Black
Seconder:	Craig Rowley
Outcome:	Approved

unconfirmed draft

8. General business

8.1 General business

The Forum noted an acknowledgement from Tania Wati regarding the Ngāi Tahu Head Start proposal. The proposal was prepared within a very tight timeframe and that the process had not allowed advance notice to Forum members, which was acknowledged as not ideal.

8.2 Meeting review

8.3 Closing karakia

9. Kai - lunch

9.1 Lunch

Canterbury electorate and list Members of Parliament joined the Mayoral Forum for lunch.

10. Close Meeting

10.1 Close the meeting

Next meeting: Canterbury Mayoral Forum - 19 Feb 2027, 8:30 am

Signature:_____ **Date:**_____