

MINUTES (in Review)

CANTERBURY MAYORAL FORUM



Name:	Canterbury Mayoral Forum
Date:	Friday, 20 February 2026
Time:	8:30 am to 12:30 am (NZDT)
Location:	Commodore Hotel, 449 Memorial Avenue, Burnside, Christchurch
Board Members:	Nigel Bowen (Chair), Craig Mackle, Craig Rowley, Dan Gordon, Dr Leon Swiggs, Liz McMillan, Lydia Gliddon, Marie Black, Melanie Taveale
Attendees:	Alex Parmley, Angela Oosthuizen, Dr Stefanie Rixecker, Hamish Debbie, Hamish Riach, Jeff Millward, Mary Richardson, Nigel Trainor, Steve Gibling, Will Doughty, Maree McNeilly, Amelia Wilkins, Ann Fitzgerald
Apologies:	Scott Aronsen, Phil Mauger, Justin Tipa, Tania Wati, Stuart Duncan
Guests/Notes:	Rit Fisher, Deputy Mayor Mackenzie District (for Mayor Scott Aronsen), Sir Brian Roche, Public Service Commissioner Diane McDermott, Regional Public Service Commissioner (Item 3.1); Matthew Bacon, Amanda Thompson, Canterbury Planning Managers Group (Item 5.2); Jesse Burgess, Canterbury Regional Council (Items 5.4, 5.5, 5.6); Nick Sedgett, Infrastructure New Zealand, Catherine Shipton, Simpson Gerson (Item 6.2)

1. Open Meeting

1.1 Welcome, karakia and apologies

The Chair welcomed participants and opened the meeting a karakia.

Apologies from Scott Aronsen, Phil Mauger, Justin Tipa, Tania Wati and Stuart Duncan were noted, with Rit Fisher, Deputy Mayor Mackenzie District attending the meeting for Mayor Scott Aronsen.

The Chair led an acknowledgement of Anne Munro, who passed away recently. Anne was a two-term Mackenzie District councillor, and Mayor from 2022. Anne was a member of the Canterbury Biodiversity Champions, both as a councillor and then Mayor.

A Mayoral Forum donation of \$300 towards a planting restoration project in the Mackenzie District in memory of Anne will be arranged.

1.2 Confirmation of agenda

The agenda was confirmed as presented.

Two items of general business were raised, however these were picked up in the discussion on item 2.1.

- does the Mayoral Forum need to meet more frequently to address the reform programme?
- funding requirements related to the legislative reform programme.

1.3 Minutes from the previous meeting

Canterbury Mayoral Forum 28 Nov 2025, the minutes were confirmed as presented.



Decision

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2025 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Craig Rowley
Seconded: Craig Mackle
Outcome: Approved

1.4 Action List

Due Date	Action Title	Owner(s)
30 Jun 2025	Action Status: On Hold	Maree McNeilly
30 Jun 2025	Action Status: On Hold	Nigel Bowen
30 Jan 2026	Action Status: In Progress	Hanish Lobbie
30 Jan 2026	Action Status: In Progress	Maree McNeilly
30 Jan 2026	Action Status: In Progress	Maree McNeilly

2. For discussion and decision

2.1 Central Government reform of local government

Simplifying Local Government proposal

The draft Mayoral Forum submission on the Simplifying Local Government proposal was considered by Mayoral Forum members. Particular discussion related to paragraphs 24-27 and the Combined Territories Boards.

Chair Swiggs proposed changes to reflect that the majority of the Mayoral Forum does not support the Combined Territories Board undertaking the roles of the regional councillors.

Paragraph 24 – while there was not consensus on including point 24, members agreed to the proposed wording change with the deletion of “beyond the issue of democratic mandate”.

Paragraph 26 – there was majority support for deleting the wording “which could be achieved by having regional council representation”.

It was noted that the wording in paragraphs 40-43 did not go far enough to emphasise the financial cost associated with reorganization, however no changes were proposed.

There was discussion around the table on the timing of legislation to implement the changes, however a number of members noted that work should get underway, regardless of the legislation. Forum members support preparatory work on scoping a work programme for implementing the Simplifying Local Government reform, and the Chief Executives Forum has been asked to start the scoping for this work.

It was noted that funding for this work has not been addressed, and funding from councils would need to go through their respective annual and long-term plans as individual councils are not in a position to fund this from existing budgets. One option that could be considered is regional council debt funding, however scoping of the work required would need to be completed first.

It was also noted that options for external support from Department of Internal Affairs should be explored.

Resource Management Bills and Emergency Management Bill submissions

It was noted that Mayoral Forum submissions on the Resource Management Bills and the Mayoral Forum and CDEM submission on the Emergency Management Bill have been lodged.



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. approved the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's submission to the Simplifying Local Government Proposal, with wording changes agreed at the meeting
2. received the summary from the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's January 2026 Workshops
3. noted the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's submissions on the Rates Target Model proposal, Natural Environment and Planning Bills, and Emergency Management Bill
4. noted that funding (quantity, scope and source) to address the simplifying local government proposal still needs to be identified and confirmed, and request the Chief Executives Forum to scope a work programme for implementation of the Simplifying Local Government proposal.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Nigel Bowen
Seconder: Dan Gordon
Outcome: Approved



Action

Chief Executives Forum to scope a work programme for implementation of the Simplifying Local Government reform

Due Date: 27 Apr 2026
Owners: Hamish Dobbie, Maree McNeilly



Action

Mayoral Forum to approach Department of Internal Affairs for support to progress the Simplifying Local Government proposal.

Due Date: 27 Mar 2026
Owners: Maree McNeilly, Nigel Bowen

3. For discussion

3.1 Sir Brian Roche (Public Service Commissioner)

Sir Brian Roche (Public Service Commissioner) and Diane McDermott, Regional Public Service Commissioner, were welcomed to the meeting.

Diane outlined her role and noted the benefits of regular communication with the Mayoral Forum and the other regional forums, and that her office has been able to contribute to several CMF priorities and workstreams - energy, youth related projects and housing. Continuing to work together as a region is key.

Sir Brian provided a brief overview of his Public Service Commissioner role – statutory responsibility for the public service. His recent report on the state of the public sector tabled in parliament noted a need for public sector reform and system changes.

The concept of the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport was explained – there is no desire to undermine any of these functions, rather an aim to change “the machine” to improve engagement with an integrated and better resourced agency.

Sir Brian acknowledged the significant legislative reform underway and resulting workload for local government. If there are issues, questions CMF can send these via Diane and Sir Brian will do his best to “unlock the system”.

The power of a common voice from Canterbury was emphasised. The more unified the voice the stronger the case is.

CMF members raised the following questions/points

- Strong council relationships with central government agencies in Canterbury means the region can make a positive contribution to shaping legislation and policy. The practice of central government to only reach out to Auckland for opinion/input was noted
- The significant innovation happening in Canterbury, the increase in younger population and fast growth, sets a case for bringing central government staff back to Canterbury. Sir Brian noted a long term model for a strong centre and a distributed network away from Wellington
- Will regulators be bought into a single body? Sir Brian expressed the view that the country is over-regulated. Strong clear regulation is needed, and the public management system of regulation has evolved since it was established in the 1980/90's. He is raising options for models that are used internationally
- The unique nature of the Canterbury region was noted. While statistically Christchurch dominates, central government needs to recognize that Canterbury issues are broader than Christchurch alone. While acknowledging this, Sir Brian emphasized the importance of one strong "voice" for Canterbury, while recognising "local flavour"
- Support from Canterbury local government for Chatham Islands issues was offered
- What is Sir Brian's vision around data? Sir Brian acknowledged currently data is disaggregated, and the public service agencies don't share data. He considers greater data sharing is a priority, as disaggregation impedes the ability to serve
- New Zealand shouldn't be apologetic for being small – Singapore is a similar size and they celebrate it!

In acknowledgment of Sir Brian and Diane making time to speak with the Mayoral Forum gift vouchers for tree planting were presented.

4. KAI - Morning tea

4.1 Kai - morning tea

5. For discussion and decision

5.1 Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2026-2028

The vision, priorities and actions for the Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2026-2208, and the proposed elevator pitch, have been drafted based on the discussion at the Mayoral Forum workshop on 30 January.

Members were happy with the vision, priorities and action, however, want to see a much clearer and stronger elevator pitch.

There needs to be a clear ask in the pitch. This could be framed around common themes in the projects/programmes that councils have provided to Minister Meager at his request.

There was a recommendation to consider a one-page infographic with the details and statistics that would accompany the pitch.

Discussion on the draft included in the paper noted:

- less focus on retrospective matters
- seek input from Ngāi Tahu representatives

- emphasise need for central government investment and funding, and also other tools that can be utilised better to assist investment, examples such as Canterbury as a “special economic zone” or other policy settings
- Canterbury is poised for growth and can support the government’s objectives
- acknowledge councils’ financial investment in Canterbury, including in tourism and agriculture sectors, and the investment needed from central government
- stable and “credible” partner
- include examples of underinvestment
- align with Canterbury Ambition and Regional Deal work
- transport funding – require equitable level of funding and support for new funding tools.



Action

Update the elevator pitch based on discussions and seek input from Mayoral and Chief Executives Forums’ Chairs before circulating to both forums.

Due Date: 23 Mar 2026
Owner: Maree McNeilly



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. confirmed the vision, priorities and actions for the Mayoral Forum’s Plan for Canterbury 2026-2028
2. noted the draft elevator pitch to support the Mayoral Forum’s Plan for Canterbury 2026-2028
3. noted the process to update and finalise a draft document for approval at the May 2026 Mayoral Forum meeting.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Marie Black
Seconder: Lydia Goldon
Outcome: approved

5.2 Regional Spatial Planning update

Angela Oosthuizen, Chair of the Canterbury Policy Forum, introduced the paper which provides an update on the Chief Executive Forum (CEF) direction to the Canterbury Planning Managers Group to commence early preparatory work for a Regional Spatial Plan under the draft Planning Bill.

The CEF direction was to complete a targeted gap analysis against the Canterbury Spatial Planning Stocktake and draft Terms of Reference for a regional Spatial Planning Committee and a supporting Working Group/Secretariat.

Matthew Burt (Chair of the Canterbury Planning Managers Group) and Amanda Thompson (member, Canterbury Planning Managers Group) provided an update on how the Canterbury Planning Managers Group are progressing this work.

- while awaiting legislation to be enacted, the Planning Managers Group are preparing a high-level programme scope, supported by a draft high level work programme
- terms of reference for a regional Spatial Planning Committee and a supporting Working Group/Secretariat are being drafted
- the Group has undertaken a high-level targeted gap analysis of existing spatial strategies and mapped spatial layers with District Plan and the Regional Plan, across the region. There is mixed work across the region in these areas, and the Group is working through how this is likely to align with the new planning framework

- early engagement with Mana Whenua through the Papatipu Rūnanga Environmental Entities regarding the approach and process for this work. Once frameworks are in place further discussions with Ngāi Tahu will occur.

Several Chief Executives acknowledged the ambitious target that was set for the Planning Managers Group, noting that good progress has been made. It was also noted that to continue to progress this work appropriate funding needs to be identified.

It was recognized that while the legislation has not yet been passed there is clear direction for the regional spatial planning committee and options for this committee can be progressed now.

The Mayoral Forum requested that the Chief Executive Forum progress the work required on scoping a regional spatial plan committee, as per the requirements in the Planning Bill.



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the Canterbury Chief Executives Forum has directed early preparatory work to enable Canterbury to be ready to meet proposed statutory obligations and timeframes for preparation of a regional spatial plan under the draft Planning Bill
2. noted the Canterbury Planning Managers Group is progressing, using existing staff resources, the tasks requested by the Chief Executives Forum, including:
 - i. a targeted gap analysis against the Canterbury Spatial Planning Stocktake to identify priority evidence, data, staffing, and coordination needs
 - ii. draft Terms of Reference for a Regional Spatial Planning Committee under the Planning Bill and a supporting Working Group/Secretariat
3. noted the initiation of early engagement with Mana Whenua to inform the approach to regional spatial planning, including future governance and work programme options
4. requested the Chief Executives Forum prioritise development of options for establishing a Regional Spatial Planning Committee and accompanying terms of reference.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Nigel Bowen
Seconded: Dr Deon Swiggs
Outcome: Approved

5.3 Canterbury Water Management Strategy

The paper was taken as read. Several points were noted:

- reference to Rangitata catchment in the recommendations should read Rangitata river
- local leadership groups are moving forward where there is agreement. The right membership is critical to the effectiveness of the groups
- clarification that the agricultural sector leadership group established to strengthen relationship and build shared understandings of groundwater quality issues was at request of industry, rather than a doubling up on the CWMS local leadership groups
- the nitrate issue and working with industry could form a new focus for the CWMS local leadership group
- drinking water - a request that the planned targeted engagement with private household suppliers include the relevant local territorial authority.



Decision

That the Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. noted the update for October to December 2025 on work underway to implement the Canterbury Water Management Strategy
2. noted that the establishment of local leadership groups is progressing, with establishment hui held in six out of eight areas
3. noted that the Rangitata river will act as the boundary between the Ōrāri Temuka Ōpihi Pareora and Hakatere local leadership group areas, with the final status of the Rakaia and Ihutai catchments still to be confirmed by all relevant parties.

Christchurch City Council abstained from voting on this item and requested that this be recorded in the minutes.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Liz McMillan
Seconder: Marie Black
Outcome: Approved

5.4 Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan update

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

The Plan is now midway through Year 2, and meaningful progress continues amidst the changing regulatory environment.

A review of the Plan is being undertaken, including scope of actions, timeframes for key milestones, and anticipated associated expenditure. This will be presented at the May 2026 Mayoral Forum meeting for consideration.



Action

Analysis of future funding and forecast expenditure for year 3 to be included in the review of the CCPP and presented at the May 2026 Mayoral Forum meeting. (Jesse Burgess)

Due Date: May 2026
Owner: Maree McNeilly



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. received the quarterly Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan implementation progress report and accompanying budget summary
2. noted the:
 - i. procurement of a regional natural and climate hazard and risk data inventory analysis, and
 - ii. request for information to test the market and complete the scoping of action 1.1, a regional natural hazard risk visualisation tool for use by councils to support climate adaptation and resilience planning
3. received the Emissions Reduction - Transition Risks and Opportunities Assessment summary report, noting the completion of sub-action 2.2 with this Deliverable

4. noted the analysis of the recently published National Adaptation Framework, and the alignment of the Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan to it and the broader suite of central government reforms
5. noted the Canterbury Climate Change Working Group will initiate a review of the Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan, bringing further advice to the Canterbury Mayoral Forum at its meeting in May 2026.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Dan Gordon
Seconder: Nigel Bowen
Outcome: Approved

5.5 Regional Energy Workstream update

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

It was noted that work is progressing at pace, including positive engagement with rūnanga through the Papatipu Rūnanga Environmental Entities with the intention of having the Action Plan completed by 30 June 2026.

It was noted that the energy work will be a useful input for the regional spatial plan.



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. provided feedback on the revised draft Regional Energy Strategic Framework (Attachment 1) and supporting report Our Energy Future: A regional approach to energy in Waitānaki Canterbury (Attachment 2) by 2 March 2026
2. noted the intention to present the final draft Strategic Framework and supporting report to the Canterbury Mayoral Forum in May 2026
3. noted that committee forecast costs for key activities in FY2025/26 total approximately \$53,607, and that it is proposed that the remaining unallocated funding be used to bring in external resourcing to support the delivery of the draft regional energy action plan / roadmap by 30 June 2026
4. noted that targeted engagement with stakeholders, mana whenua and community groups is ongoing.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026
Mover: Dan Gordon
Seconder: Dr Deon Swiggs
Outcome: Approved

5.6 Canterbury Regional Deal proposal update

Nigel Bowen provided an update on preparation for a future Canterbury regional deal proposal. A Regional Deal Governance and Working Group has been established and a scope of work is being prepared.

While there is currently no further funding for this project post 30 June 2026, the development of the scope of work is being undertaken in a way that will enable aspects of the project to be picked up should resources become available in the future.

Mayoral Forum will meet with Business Canterbury to discuss the Canterbury Ambition work and the connections into the scoping for the regional deal proposal.

The newly released Connecting Canterbury: Strengthening Infrastructure for Growth White Paper highlights opportunities that could form a focus for any future regional deal.



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. approved the draft terms of references for the Regional Deal Governance and Working Groups.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026

Mover: Nigel Bowen

Seconder: Marie Black

Outcome: Approved

5.7 Chief Executives Forum report

Hamish Dobbie presented the report, noting the progress on the Plan for Canterbury strategic workplan.



Decision

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum:

1. received the quarterly report from the Chief Executives Forum
2. noted updates on work under way or completed on the key actions in the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury 2023-2025.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026

Mover: Nigel Bowen

Seconder: Craig Mackle

Outcome: Approved

6. For information

6.1 Activities and Engagements

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 28 November 2025.

Decision Date: 20 Feb 2026

Mover: Marie Black

Seconder: Liz McMillan

Outcome: Approved

6.2 Connecting Canterbury White Paper

The Chair welcomed Nick Leggett, Infrastructure New Zealand and Catherine Shipton, Simpson Grierson to the meeting to present the Connecting Canterbury: Strengthening Infrastructure for Growth White paper.

The growing Canterbury economy, which presents opportunities and challenges for the region, was the impetus for the White Paper

- opportunities to apply lessons learned through earthquake times to the future

- move from project by project to a more integrated approach to infrastructure, with coordinated actions
- key theme is connectedness – sharing knowledge, ideas, technology and processes
- proposed priority areas (for illustrative purposes), noting an opportunity to work together on replacing and future-proofing bridges and culverts
- infrastructure will be an enabler for regional spatial planning, and an important part of any future regional deal

Infrastructure New Zealand undertook engagement during the development of the paper with a range of leaders across Canterbury including Ngāi Tahu and industry.

Discussion noted:

- this is a worthwhile piece of work that sets up a good platform, and we need to work together to progress the ideas included in the white paper
- opportunities to test different funding tools
- rural/urban differing requirements and priorities
- the document has a strong Christchurch focus, some gaps include Timaru port, industrial areas outside of Christchurch, power generation
- the paper provides a platform to work together, and highlights opportunities to work together at scale
- funding models such as public private partnerships
- a need to move forward from a disaster/recovery mindset – how is the conversation reframed so we address issues before the disaster?
- strong support for the inclusion of digital infrastructure in the white paper
- collective discussions about assets, rather than in silos
- critical to get good data, with a common baseline and be able to coordinate actions
- past issues with central government funding contribution for capital assets, but local communities then need to be able to afford to fund maintenance
- need to articulate return on investment
- financial discipline required to fund asset management and maintenance

A question was raised about who would be on the “Canterbury Infrastructure Coordination Group”, which is a quick win action in the White Paper. This group has not yet been formed.

7. General business

7.1 General business

The items of general business were covered in item 2.1

7.2 Meeting review

7.3 Closing karakia

8. Kai - lunch

8.1 Lunch

9. Road Safety Week Campaign

9.1 Road Safety Week Campaign filming

Filming was undertaken with the Mayoral Forum members following lunch and the close of the meeting.

10. Close Meeting

10.1 Close the meeting

Next meeting: Canterbury Mayoral Forum - 29 May 2026, 8:30 am

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Unconfirmed draft