

# Otago Mayoral Forum

Friday 28 March 2025

9:00am-12:00pm, ORC Council Chamber  
Level 2, Philip Laing House, 144 Rattray St, Dunedin

Chair: Mayor Gary Kircher

Time	Item		Paper
9:00 [5']	1	<b>Welcome</b> Apologies – Mayor Glyn Lewers, Steve Hill Minutes of the previous Otago Mayoral Forum on 13 Dec 2024	p. 3
9.05 [25']	2	<b>LGNZ National Council update</b> Mayor Jules Radich will update members on matters relating to Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ). Mayor Radich is a metro representative on LGNZ's National Council.	
9.30 [30']	3	<b>Water Services Delivery Plans</b> Members are invited to provide an update on their council's approach to Water Services Delivery Plans, including collaborative arrangements where applicable.	
10.00 [15']	4	<b>Youth (dis)engagement</b> Mayor Jules Radich will lead a discussion on issues associated with disengaged youth in Otago.	
10.15	-	<b><i>Morning tea</i></b>	
10.30 [15']	5	<b>Regional Deals</b> An opportunity for members to update the Forum on regional deal proposals and plans within Otago.	
10.45 [45']	6	<b>General Business</b> General business as arising.	
11.30 [30']	7	<b>Regional Public Service Commissioner for Otago and Southland</b> Steph Voight, Regional Public Service Commissioner for Otago and Southland, joins the Forum as part of its commitment to a joined-up public service in Otago.	
12.00	-	<b><i>Close</i></b>	

Minutes of a meeting of the Otago Mayoral Forum  
held on Friday 13 December 2024 at 9.00am  
in the Council Chamber and via Zoom



**Membership**

Mayor Tamah Alley	Central Otago District Council
Mayor Bryan Cadogan	Clutha District Council
Mayor Jules Radich	Dunedin City Council
Cr Gretchen Robertson	Otago Regional Council
Mayor Glyn Lewers	Queenstown Lakes District Council
Mayor Gary Kircher	Waitaki District Council

Chief Executive Peter Kelly	Central Otago District Council
Chief Executive Steve Hill	Clutha District Council
Chief Executive Sandy Graham (apology)	Dunedin City Council
Chief Executive Richard Saunders	Otago Regional Council
Chief Executive Mike Theelen	Queenstown Lakes District Council
Chief Executive Alex Parmley	Waitaki District Council

**In attendance**

Marianna Brook, Principal Advisor, Mayoral Forum Secretariat  
Kelly Taylor Covey, Executive Assistant, Otago Regional Council

**1. WELCOME**

**1.1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Sandy Graham.

It was moved:

*That the apology be accepted.*

Moved: Mayor B Cadogan

Seconded: Cr Robertson

CARRIED

Mayor Tamah Alley was welcomed to her first Otago Mayoral Forum meeting.

**1.2 Minutes confirmation**

It was moved:

*That the minutes of the Otago Mayoral Forum meeting held on 6 September 2024 be confirmed as a true and correct record.*

Moved: Mayor B Cadogan

Seconded: Glyn Lewers

CARRIED

## **2. HON KIERAN MCANULTY MP**

Kieran McAnulty, Labour Spokesperson for Housing, Local Government and Regional Development, and Rachel Brooking, Member for Dunedin and Labour Spokesperson for Environment, Food Safety and Space, joined the Forum to discuss issues of shared interest.

Mr McAnulty spoke first, with an initial focus on Regional Deals, regional development and local government funding and financing. He noted that funding challenges outlined in the final report of the Review into the Future for Local Government had not gone away. In opposition, Labour would be looking closely at what the Government is introducing, while also exploring examples of best practice from overseas. Mr McAnulty said he would be looking for areas of mutual agreement, and focussing opposition on a smaller number of essential concerns in the hope that these would have greater impact.

Both MPs discussed issues associated with the Fast Track Approvals Act, and in particular the concern that councils would become intermediaries for public feedback on proposals for which they had little control. Other matters raised during the discussion included water services reform, resource management reform, and unfunded mandates.

There was further discussion after Mr McAnulty and Ms Brooking left the meeting. It was noted that several current Government Ministers had been invited to Forum meetings in 2024 but had declined for various reasons. The Chair raised the possibility of travelling to Wellington to engage with Ministers directly, noting that the Canterbury Forum is hoping to arrange such a trip in 2025.

## **3. WATER SERVICES REFORM – GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Forum members shared updates on water services reform discussions at their respective councils, ahead of DIA's visit scheduled for later in the meeting.

The Mayors of Clutha, Waitaki, Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago all confirmed that a joint council-controlled organisation (CCO) would be one option presented to ratepayers in the New Year, though Waitaki wasn't making its decision until the week following this Mayoral Forum. Dunedin City Council is yet to make a decision on its consultation options. A key matter for all councils will be the information available to present to ratepayer on the various options, and especially the option of a joint CCO. Clutha, Waitaki and Central Otago Councils are all engaging with Morrison Low to develop more detailed analysis.

## **4. WASTEWATER STANDARDS**

Otago Regional Council CE Richard Saunders led a discussion on new wastewater performance standards and their potential impact on consenting processes in Otago.

Mr Saunders advised that the new standards will have a big impact on regional councils. Wastewater facilities will be required to meet (but not exceed) the required standard with limited exceptions, and the standards will supersede all national directions.

Further details on the standards and associated policies are due early in 2025. Key questions include how

regional councils are to manage the suite of consents associated with a wastewater plant (land-use, water take, air discharge), in addition to the wastewater discharge consent; concern about Councils' flexibility to manage compliance from a low base; and a lack of flexibility with regards receiving environment.

## **5. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **Agenda items for meetings on February 5, 2025**

- o Joint Otago and Southland Mayoral Forum
- o Joint Otago and Southland Te Rōpū Taiao

Members raised water services reform (including wastewater standards) and unitary council/council reorganization matters for potential inclusion in the joint Mayoral Forum agenda. There was broad support for a Te Rōpū Taiao discussion on legislation impacting on Te Tiriti and our Te Tiriti-based relationships in the South, subject to the Co-Chairs' feedback and further input.

### **Waste funding advocacy: draft letter for the Forum's consideration**

Members considered a draft letter expressing concern about a lack of consultation on changes to the Waste Minimisation Fund, which is funded through the Waste Levy collected at waste disposal facilities (including council facilities). It was agreed that the letter should be reworked to express the Forum's expectation that waste levy funding remain available for waste initiatives, and that future changes to funding, policy and legislation include consultation with councils.

### **2025 meeting schedule**

The 2025 meeting schedule was tabled and approved. All meetings are in diaries as placeholders.

## **6. WATER SERVICES REFORM - DIA**

The meeting concluded with a visit from Bex Sullivan, Deputy Executive Director, Water Services Policy, Legislation & Stewardship, and Marlon Bridge, Chief Technical Advisor from the Department of Internal Affairs, who joined the Forum to discuss ongoing water services delivery reform matters. Central/Local Government Partnership Director Warren Ulusele also attended.

Mr Bridge provided overall impressions of similar conversations across the country and noted that several regions have formally agreed to work towards a joint water services entity. He noted that DIA can provide support to councils and groups of councils, while ensuring councils maintain overall control of the process.

Water Services Delivery Plans are a focus for all councils. Mr Bridge described these plans as a 'taster' of the economic regulation and oversight than can be expected from the Government's economic regulator to come. The regulations are likely to be 'tough and intrusive' and councils and CCOs should plan to be transparent.

Ms Sullivan advised the next Bill being introduced to the House was extensive. Submissions would open before Christmas and were expected to remain open until the end of February.

The meeting closed at 12.10pm



Chair Gary Kircher

28 March 2025

Date