



Friday 6 March 2026

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

Chair: Mayor Melanie Tavendale

Time	Item	Paper
9:00am [5']	1 Welcome Apologies – received from ORC Chair Hilary Calvert (Deputy Chair Kevin Malcolm attending), Mayor Tamah Alley and Sandy Graham. Minutes from the previous meeting Agenda confirmation	p. 3
9.05am [70']	2 Workshop session to develop the Otago Mayoral Forum regional focus areas Members are invited to confirm regional focus areas and their relative priority for the year ahead.	p. 6
10.15am	- Morning tea	
10.30am [30']	3 Otago submissions on Simplifying Local Government The attached report summarises Otago's responses to the Government's Simplifying Local Government draft proposal, and identifies areas of alignment. The Forum is invited to consider joint positions on the proposal. An appendix to the report provides data on local authorities in Otago and is intended to inform the discussion.	p. 7
11.00am [30']	4 Advocacy and Government engagement Drawing on earlier discussions, the Forum is invited to plan for joint advocacy and engagement with Government Ministers and officials.	

11.30am	5	General business	
[30']		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Triennial agreement – ratified and ready for signing• Otago Mayoral Forum terms of reference• Meeting locations for 2026• Preparation for Te Rōpū Taiao Otago	<p>p. 13</p> <p>p. 20</p> <p>p. 23</p>

12.00pm - ***Meeting close***
Lunch to follow
Te Rōpū Taiao Otago commences at 12.30pm

**Minutes of a meeting of the Otago Mayoral Forum
held on Friday 5 December 2025 at 9.00am, Otago Regional Council
Chamber**

Level 2, Philip Laing House, 144 Rattray St, Dunedin

Members present

Chair Hilary Calvert	Otago Regional Council
Mayor Jock Martin	Clutha District Council
Mayor John Glover	Queenstown Lakes District Council
Mayor Melanie Tavendale	Waitaki District Council
Mayor Sophie Barker	Dunedin City Council
Mayor Tamah Alley	Central Otago District Council
Chief Executive Alex Parmley	Waitaki District Council
Chief Executive Mike Theelen	Queenstown Lakes District Council
Chief Executive Peter Kelly	Central Otago District Council
Chief Executive Richard Saunders	Otago Regional Council
Chief Executive Sandy Graham	Dunedin City Council
Chief Executive Steve Hill	Clutha District Council

In Attendance

Marianna Brook	Principal Advisor, Mayoral Forum Secretariat
Kylie Darragh	Governance Support Officer, Otago Regional Council

1. WELCOME

Chief Executive Mike Theelen opened the meeting with a karakia at 9:08 am.

1.1 Apologies

There were no apologies for this meeting.

1.2 Election of a Chair

Mr Theelen called for nominations, of which there was one.

It was moved to nominate Mayor Tavendale as Chair of the Mayoral Forum.

Moved Mayor Alley

Seconded Mayor Barker

CARRIED

Mayor Tavendale took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

1.3 Agenda confirmation

The agenda was confirmed with no changes.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members discussed the Government's recent "Simplifying Local Government" proposal, which is open for feedback until February 20, 2026. Various issues, opportunities and options were

raised, including the timeline for reform and interaction with long-term plans and elections; the need to consider catchments as well as communities; and the benefit of considering what our communities need and want from local government before moving to solutions. Those present agreed that the proposed reforms represent significant work and resource. All expressed a willingness to work together as and when possible, including by sharing Otago Councils' draft responses to the Government's proposal once available.

9:45 am Sandy Graham left the meeting.

9:47 am Sandy Graham returned to the meeting.

3. TRIENNIAL AGREEMENT

The draft Otago Local Authorities Triennial Agreement was reviewed by the Forum, this being the opportunity to suggest any changes prior to inviting councils to ratify the agreement by 1 March 2026. There were no suggested changes. The proposed agreement will be circulated to members by email so that it can be shared with councillors.

It was requested that the triennial agreement cover paper for councils' use put the agreement in the context of the Forum's plans to develop focus areas for the year ahead, and the Government's proposed reforms.

Recommendation

That the Otago Mayoral Forum:

- a. **review** the attached Otago Local Authorities Triennial Agreement 2026-29, raising any amendments for discussion;*
- b. **note** that the Forum secretariat is available to support engagement on the draft agreement at Otago's councils; and*
- c. **agree** to refer the agreement to councils for ratification prior to 1 March 2026.*

Moved Cr Calvert

Seconded Mayor Alley

CARRIED

4. OTAGO MAYORAL FORUM FOUNDATIONS

Members were invited to discuss how the Forum should operate in the new triennium. It was agreed that decisions would be by consensus, that members would be permitted to send delegates if required, and that meetings should take place at locations across the region when practical to do so. A terms of reference will be prepared covering these and other details, for the Forum's approval at the next meeting.

5. 2026 FORUM SCHEDULE

The 2026 meeting schedule was circulated for approval. There are 5 meetings, occurring approximately every 2 months. All dates are in diaries and will be changed from placeholders to confirmed following the meeting.

With a chair elected, it is now possible to approach Edward Ellison, Te Rōpū Taiao Otago co-chair and schedule Te Rōpū Taiao Otago hui for the year. Where possible, these will be co-located with Otago Mayoral Forum meetings.

A joint Otago and Southland Mayoral Forum is yet to be scheduled. It is likely to be later in the year than usual due to there being no large-scale Waitangi Day event in Otago in 2026.

6. PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE FORUM FOCUS AREAS

A workshop to develop focus areas is scheduled for March 6, 2026, as part of the next Forum meeting. It was agreed that the supporting papers for the workshop should be circulated early to allow members to seek input from councillors.

At 10.38 am the Forum adjourned for morning tea.

At 11:04 am the Forum returned.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

Members acknowledged the recent request from the Minister for the South Island to identify policy and project priorities from across the region. A meeting with the Minister is likely to take place early in 2026, with a date to be agreed. Members agreed that the Otago CE Forum should assist to collate a response to the Minister's priorities template, due before Christmas.

A proposed letter of support for Waste Busters was discussed.

It was agreed that with the removal of last sentence the draft letter be approved by the Forum.

Moved Chair Tavendale

Seconded Mayor Martin

MOTION CARRIED

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

There was no further business, so Chair Tavendale declared the Forum closed at 11.17am



Chair Melanie Tavendale

6 March 2026

Date

Regional Focus Areas

- Otago’s 2026-29 triennial agreement asks the Otago Mayoral Forum to confirm a set of regional focus areas and a direction of travel for each.
- Regional focus areas are matters that either require or would benefit from a cross-council approach in Otago.
- Members are invited to consider, refine and prioritise the five proposed focus areas outlined on this page.
- A work programme enabling the Forum to drive and/or oversee progress on each confirmed focus area will be developed following the discussion.
- NOTE: Matters covered by statutory joint committee – transport and civil defence – are not presented as focus areas. Linkages and gaps related to these areas may be within the Forum’s scope.

Climate resilience

Taking practical action despite uncertainty

Ongoing reform, increasing climate-related risks, constrained funding, and infrastructure pressures require Otago to strengthen resilience through proactive, no-regrets actions.

Outcome

Strategic coordination improves Otago’s resilience to climate-exacerbated natural hazards.

Early actions

1. Align councils’ approaches to identifying risks and setting priorities, and integrate these into planning, infrastructure and organisational processes.
2. Consider how new legislation and policy can be implemented in a coherent manner.

Who’s involved?

Otago Climate Officers Group (OCOG), ORC natural hazards team, planners, infrastructure teams.

Evidence base

Otago Natural Hazards Exposure Assessment, Otago Climate Risk Assessment and Climate Projections, climate strategies.

Otago’s economy

Economic advocacy through a regional lens

Otago’s economic strength lies in the diversity of its local industries. However, the many local economic opportunities and issues make effective regional advocacy more difficult.

Outcome

To strengthen Otago’s regional economic advocacy by sharing insights, aligning on a common narrative, and scaling effective local initiatives.

Early actions

1. Create a regional lens for existing initiatives
2. Coordinate advocacy and storytelling
3. Confirm collaboration processes and roles

Who’s involved?

Otago Regional Economic Development (ORED) working group, govt agencies, local MPs, chambers of commerce.

Evidence base

Existing district ED strategies; the 2019 ORED framework, and joint priorities provided to the Minister for the South Island.

Local government reform

Navigating sector change for the benefit of Otago

Government is proposing major reform of local government, with mayors, especially, expected to work closely together on regional issues and future governance arrangements.

Outcome

Secure the best outcome for Otago by coordinating regional input and advocating clearly and consistently through the reform process.

Early actions

1. Collating Otago’s Simplifying Local Government submissions, identifying commonalities and differences.
2. Developing a deeper shared understanding of Otago’s local authorities and our regional context.

Who’s involved?

Otago CE Forum, Otago Strategy Managers’ Group

Evidence base

Existing/emerging work from neighbouring regions; DIA Local Government performance metrics.

Regional spatial planning

Implementing the new planning system in Otago

The Planning Bill requires regions to deliver a regional spatial plan, overseen by a dedicated committee (or the Combined Territories Board under the Simplifying Local Government proposal). Otago has a mix of districts with and without existing spatial plans. Government’s expectations for regional spatial plans are still developing.

Outcome

A well-coordinated, region-wide spatial plan for Otago.

Early actions

1. Explore and establish fit-for-purpose cross-council working and governance arrangements.
2. Stocktake, review and verify spatial planning datasets

Who’s involved?

Planning and process design staff; sector groups.

Evidence base

Existing plans; local, regional and national spatial data; Planning Bill, Natural Environment Bill.

Minimising waste

Working together to tackle waste and recycling

New waste legislation and levy changes will reshape the waste system. Otago has gaps in recovery infrastructure and continued population growth putting pressure on existing infrastructure and resource.

Outcome

Coordinated & effective waste management and minimisation.

Early actions

1. Improving data quality at a regional scale
2. Shared infrastructure planning and investment focused on priority material streams – e.g. C&D
3. Region-wide planning for emergency waste

Who’s involved?

Otago Regional Waste Officer (jointly funded), Southland Otago Waste Network (SOWN), Regional Waste Strategy group.

Evidence base

Waste legislation amendments (MfE), Otago TAs’ WMMPs, Local Government Waste Manifesto (WasteMINZ) ⁶

Date: 6 March 2026

Drafted by: Marianna Brook, Principal Advisor, Mayoral Forum Secretariat

Otago responses to the Government's Simplifying Local Government draft proposal

Purpose

1. This paper compares Otago's council submissions on the Government's Simplifying Local Government proposal. Drawing on these submissions, it proposes common position statements and possible joint actions for the Forum's consideration.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Otago Mayoral Forum:
 - a. **notes** this summary of Otago council submissions on the Government's Simplifying Local Government draft proposal;
 - b. **considers and approves** the joint position statements in paragraph 11; and
 - c. **considers** possible joint actions in response to the reforms, with all actions to be brought back to future meetings for further discussion.

Background

3. In November 2025, the Coalition Government released a draft proposal for far-reaching local government reform. The proposal outlines two major changes: replacing elected regional councillors with a 'combined territories board' (CTB) made up of mayors and requiring each region to develop and implement a 'regional reorganisation plan' (RRP).
4. All six Otago councils submitted feedback on the proposal in February. While each council approaches the issues from its own context, there is strong regional alignment on several matters.
5. Ministers are due to report back to Cabinet with a final proposal in March. This will include a preliminary view on any regional council functions which could cease or be returned to central government. Under current timeframes, draft legislation is expected mid-2026, to be enacted mid-2027.
6. Local Government reform is proposed as one of five regional focus areas for the Otago Mayoral Forum in 2026. If confirmed at today's meeting, the Forum will oversee cross-council responses to the reforms through Otago's cross-council partnership framework, escalating to Otago's Councils as needed.
7. How the reforms progress within Otago – including who might be involved at which points, and the analysis and advice required – remains to be seen and will depend on decisions made by Government in response to the submissions.
8. Appendix A is an overview of Otago local government key metrics. This is intended to support Forum members to take region-wide perspective on the reform process.

Otago's view of the reforms

9. The following is a summary of Otago Council submissions to Government on Simplifying Local Government, drawing on all six approved documents:

- Support for reform in principle: All councils agree that the local government system should be improved/simplified where it reduces duplication and improves value.
- Opposition to CTBs replacing regional councillors during transition: Five Otago councils explicitly oppose the immediate replacement of regional councillors; the sixth highlights practical flaws (voting, workload, timelines) and is open only to a carefully scoped, temporary alternative.
- Concern about timeframes, workload, and capacity: Otago councils consistently flag the two-year RRP window, overlap with RMA/Planning, CDEM, water reform, rates caps, LTP, and the election cycle as risks, and call for a phased transition and practical resources.
- Funding and financing gaps: Councils stress structural funding constraints (including tourism, climate adaptation, growth, unfunded mandates) and seek new tools and funding.
- Voting and representation matters: If CTBs proceed, councils want a transparent Local Government Commission calculation to weight voting within regions, and some ask to consider visitor load, economic contribution, and land area in addition to population.
- Boundaries and cross-boundary issues: Councils have concerns about the emphasis on existing regional boundaries. Waitaki seeks dual-region representation across Canterbury and Otago.
- Treaty and Māori representation: Requests for clearer, enduring mechanisms and resourced, early partnership with mana whenua; “carry-over” assurances alone are insufficient.

10. Attached as appendix B is a matrix of Council positions, as a second level of detail to this summary.

11. The following joint positions emerge from the summary above. These are proposed for discussion today and may be useful for joint advocacy and determining a direction of travel for this work as more information is received.

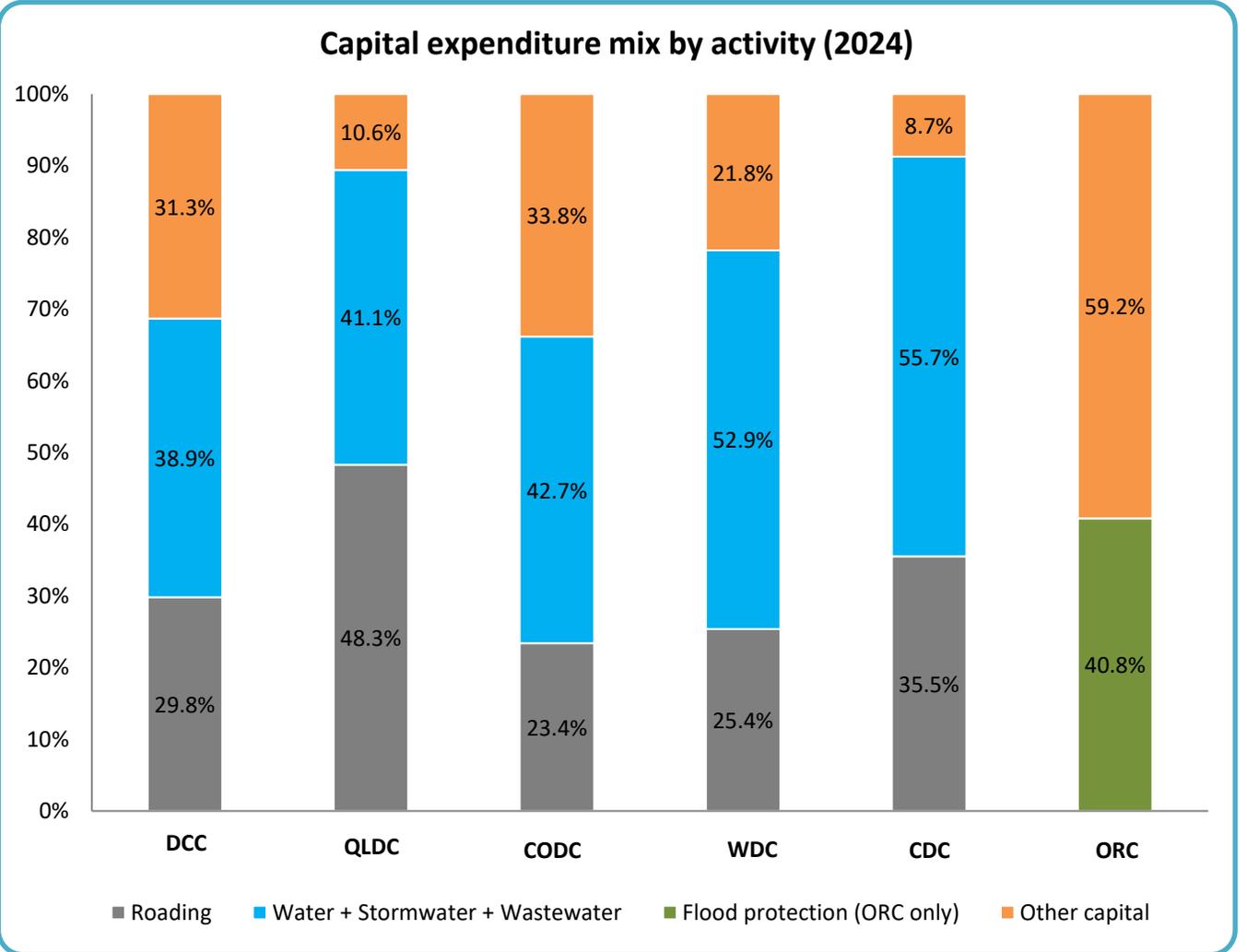
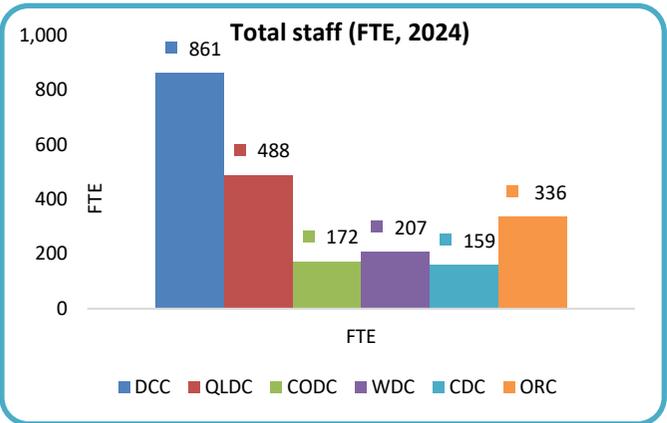
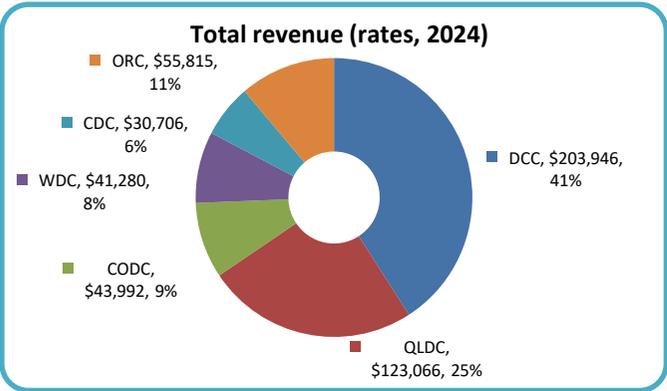
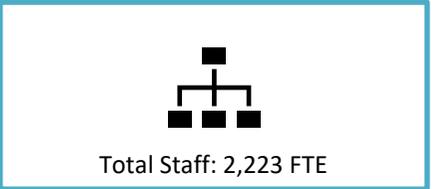
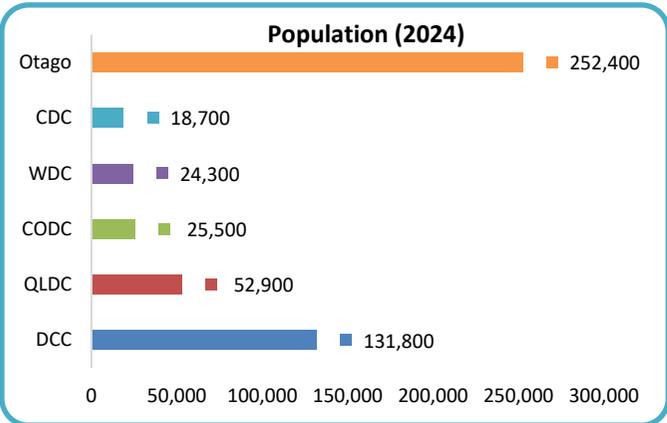
The Otago Mayoral Forum holds the following positions on Simplifying Local Government:

- The Forum wishes to retain regional councillors for BAU during this triennium, with structural decisions deferred until after the 2028 elections.
- If an Otago CTB is created, this should be limited to developing RRP and use a proportional voting approach adjusted for effective representation using transparent criteria developed by the Local Government Commission in consultation with the sector.
- An RRP for Otago should consider options beyond regional boundaries, including catchments, sub-regional service models and cross-regional collaborations. There needs to be a mechanism for cross-boundary discussions.
- The Forum supports pairing structural reform with dedicated transition funding, and wider regulatory relief and revenue tools (especially for high-growth/tourism districts).
- The Forum supports an enduring, resourced role for Iwi/Māori in the RRP process.

Next steps

12. While details of the Government’s policy are still pending, the Forum can begin conversations on how Otago’s councils might jointly respond to the proposal. On current timeframes, announcements are due at some point following Cabinet decisions this month.
13. The actions below are all possible responses to the reform proposal and should be considered a prompt for discussion. One or more of these options can be refined and brought back to future meetings for further discussions.
14. Possible future actions (ideas only) include that Otago Councils and/or the Otago Mayoral Forum:
 - Adopt an Otago transition model: Retain regional councillors for BAU this triennium; if CTBs are established, define them as planning-only entities to produce RRP; sequence structural decisions with the 2028 elections. This would be a more detailed record of the position statements above.
 - Commission an Otago “functions-first” analysis: Map which functions are best delivered at local, sub-regional, regional, cross-regional or national scale so Otago is ready with evidence-based options before formal RRP work starts.
 - Set Otago principles for CTB representation and voting: Provide the Local Government Commission with Otago’s principles: proportionality tempered by effective representation (visitor load, economic contribution, land area, service catchments) and transparent criteria.
 - Undertake joint advocacy on funding/financing and transition resourcing: Seek transition funding, regulatory relief, and new revenue tools (especially for tourism/growth districts).
 - Establish an Otago cross-boundary working group: Develop beyond-boundary options (catchments, sub-regional models), dual-region settings for Waitaki, and cross-regional service proposals (e.g., flood, transport, CDEM).
 - Co-design a Treaty/Māori partnership framework for RRP: With Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Papatipu Rūnaka: define enduring participation arrangements, resourcing, and environmental/catchment outcome expectations.
 - Create a shared “RRP Support Office”: A joint technical team (policy, analytics, programme, engagement) to support a cohesive programme of work towards Otago’s RRP.

COMPARATIVE BENCHMARKING OF OTAGO COUNCILS



Appendix B: Overview of Simplifying Local Government submissions by council

	ORC	Queenstown Lakes	Dunedin	Clutha	Central Otago	Waitaki
Support reform in principle	Yes. Simplification where it adds value.	Yes. Seeks bipartisanship, partnership, and sufficient funding.	Yes. Reform must be outcome-focused and evidence-led	Yes. With appropriate caution on pace and approach	Yes, noting that current package is systems not financial reform.	Yes. Reforms must focus on outcomes and functions first.
CTBs replacing regional councillors	Strongly opposes; retain councillors for BAU.	Opposes replacing regional councillors this triennium; CTB should focus on RRP.	Significant risks and unknowns; need to protect institutional knowledge.	Strongly disagrees; RRP should be developed under current structures.	Creates democratic and workload issues; conditionally open to CTB model only if improved.	CTB should design future, not run BAU; independent chair/members favoured.
Who leads RRP	Supports independent or alternative process (possibly South Island-wide).	CTB to lead RRP; regional councillors continue BAU	Suggest making broader user of representation reviews.	Support developing RRP under current Council structure, with Crown direction	Could accept temporary CTB if resourced and timelines extended.	CTB-led RRP with conditions (evidence-led, robust engagement, flexibility).
Voting model	Voting adjustments will not fix structural issues.	Include visitor load/economy/land area.	LGC to set votes if CTBs proceed, ensuring smaller communities are represented.	Some scepticism regarding adjusted-vote model.	Seek transparent alternative that retains elected-member accountability.	Favours mixed/weighted voting model.

Crown role in CTB	Not specified (opposes CTB).	Crown advisory or non-voting roles possible.	CTBs primarily elected; non-voting Crown roles possible.	Not specified (submission focuses on avoiding CTB)	CTBs primarily elected;; open to independent chair.	Non-voting Crown input only if needed.
Boundary issues	RRPs should not be constrained by regional boundaries; catchment scale necessary for some matters.	Must retain flexibility to reorganise beyond current regional boundaries.	Not addressed in submission.	Address cross-boundary issues in RRP under current structures.	Question whether the region is the right scope; Otago is a large, diverse area	Waitaki needs a voice in both Canterbury and Otago.
Timelines and workload	Align with wider reforms; maintain continuity where possible.	Phase with elections; retain councillors; need for funding and support.	Resource LGC and transition; avoid unfunded mandates.	CTB could impede RRP; multiple reforms strain capacity.	Two-year window unrealistic; election timing risky; mayoral workload high.	CTB dual role is unrealistic; need to complete functional analysis first.
Funding and financing	Not addressed in submission.	Call for greater autonomy to raise revenue through reform process.	Warns of unfunded mandates; risk to ratepayers.	Support efficiency but avoid rushed, under-resourced change.	Strong critique: already facing infrastructure gap and unfunded mandates.	Funding constraints persist regardless of structure.
Treaty and Māori representation	Support for an iwi role in any change mechanism.	Not addressed in submission.	Proposal does not ensure Māori representation; must engage mana whenua.	Insufficient detail on Māori representation in RRP.	Iwi best placed to advise; need to ensure adequate consideration and resourcing.	Insufficient clarity; iwi must be genuine partners; resourcing required.



Otago Local Authorities' Triennial Agreement 2026–29

Preliminaries

1. The parties to the Agreement are Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Waitaki District Council, Dunedin City Council, Clutha District Council, and the Otago Regional Council (the Parties).
2. Under section 15 of the Local Government Act 2002, every local authority in a region must enter into a triennial agreement by 1 March following local body elections.
3. The purpose of this Agreement is to confirm how Otago's councils will communicate, coordinate, and collaborate during the triennium.
4. This Agreement confirms the Parties' shared commitment to working together for the benefit of Otago's people, places, and natural environment.

Benefits of working together

5. The Parties recognise that communication, coordination and collaboration enables them to:
 - a. Build strong relationships between councils, Kāi Tahu ki Otago, and other partners;
 - b. Share information and resources, and reduce duplication of effort;
 - c. Coordinate responses to issues and opportunities that cross boundaries; and
 - d. Strengthen collective advocacy for Otago.

Otago's cross-council partnership framework

6. Otago's local authorities work together through various arrangements, including the Otago Mayoral Forum, Otago Chief Executives Forum, Hui for Otago, joint committees, governance-level working groups and advisory groups, and staff working groups. Collectively, these arrangements comprise Otago's cross-council partnership framework.
7. Each group and meeting differs in its role, membership, mandate, statutory requirements and support needs. All Otago cross-council arrangements are part of a connected framework, with governance and executive groups providing strategy and oversight, and staff groups providing support, expertise and practical advice.
8. Otago's cross-council partnership framework complements the work of each council and does not impinge on the right for each of Otago's local authorities to decide policy, agree resourcing and govern its own area as appropriate.
9. At all levels, cross-council groups within the framework:
 - a. Can identify and progress opportunities in councils' shared interest, within given mandates;
 - b. Must ensure appropriate communication with councils; and
 - c. Cannot make binding decisions, unless agreed to by individual councils.
10. Through the cross-council framework, the Parties may pursue shared outcomes through joint work programmes, co-commissioning of studies, policy development and other agreed work. The Parties may explore options to identify, deliver and fund facilities and services of significance to more than one district, as envisaged by the Act.

Forums, meetings, committees and working groups

11. Otago's cross-council partnership framework includes a number of groups, committees and other arrangements. This section describes each group, its role, responsibilities, and how it is supported.

Otago Mayoral Forum

12. The Otago Mayoral Forum brings together Otago's Mayors and the Otago Regional Council Chair to provide shared leadership, coordination, and advocacy for the region.
13. The Otago Mayoral Forum will be responsible for:
 - a. Confirming regional focus areas and a direction of travel for each.

- b. Receiving advice and reports from the Otago Chief Executives Forum on progress towards regional focus areas, opportunities for collaboration, work programmes, or collaborative projects.
- c. Overseeing a regional response to the focus areas through Otago's cross-council partnership framework, escalating to Otago's Councils as needed.
- d. Formalising shared positions through letters of support, submissions and/or public statements as appropriate.

14. The Otago Mayoral Forum will operate in accordance with a terms of reference approved by members. The Forum receives advice and support from a secretariat hosted by Otago Regional Council.

Hui for Otago

15. The Parties may convene a 'Hui for Otago' as needed, bringing together all of Otago's mayors and councillors on topics of shared interest. Hui for Otago provide an opportunity for broader engagement on matters affecting the region. A Hui for Otago could be standalone or part of a series, depending on the issue or opportunity.

16. Hui for Otago will be supported by the Otago Mayoral Forum secretariat.

Otago Chief Executives Forum

17. The Otago Chief Executives Forum is an established partnership between Otago's six local authority chief executives. The Otago Chief Executive Forum enables the Otago cross-council partnership framework at the executive level, particularly with regards staff resourcing and funding.

18. The Otago Chief Executives Forum will be responsible for:

- a. Supporting the Otago Mayoral Forum to prioritise regional focus areas and a direction of travel for each.
- b. Providing advice and reports to the Otago Mayoral Forum on progress towards regional focus areas, opportunities for collaboration, work programmes, or collaborative projects.

19. The Otago Chief Executives Forum operates under a terms of reference to be agreed by its members. The Forum receives support and advice from the Otago Mayoral Forum secretariat.

Joint committees

20. The Parties recognise the role of joint committees including statutory joint committees established for specific purposes in supporting regional coordination

and collaboration. At the time of signing, the following joint committees operate within Otago:

- a. **Otago Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group Committee**, responsible for approving the Otago CDEM Group Plan and providing guidance on civil defence implementation.
- b. **Otago Regional Transport Committee**, responsible for preparing the Otago Regional Land Transport Plan.
- c. **Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal Negotiation Committee**, responsible for providing direction to inform the negotiation of a Regional Deal between partner councils and Central Government.

21. Joint committees may be established from time to time and will be considered when collaborative activity is likely to involve some or all of: dedicated strategic oversight from more than one Otago council, significant cross-council funding, stakeholder interaction, and/or strong public interest.

22. Joint committees will operate in accordance with their establishing legislation, council resolutions, governing agreement, or terms of reference as applicable.

Governance-level advisory and working groups

23. The Parties recognise the role of governance-level advisory and working groups within Otago. These can operate at a regional or sub-regional level, and may involve central government, iwi or wider stakeholders. Advisory and working groups are less formal than joint committees and can be a useful mechanism for sharing information and working towards shared goals.

24. Current examples of governance-level advisory and working groups include the Dunedin Transport Working Group, Queenstown Transport Working Group, and the Grow Well Whaiora Partnership.

Staff working groups

25. Council staff across Otago are encouraged to discuss issues of shared interest or concern with one another.

26. Staff may form cross-council working groups to discuss regional issues and, where relevant, progress joint work programmes or collaborative projects. These groups also enable staff to share knowledge and expertise across councils.

27. Established cross-council staff working groups include:

- a. Otago Regional Economic Development Working Group,
- b. Otago Waste Network,

- c. Otago Biodiversity Forum,
- d. Otago Climate Officers' Group, and
- e. Otago Strategy Managers' Group

28. All cross-council working groups will have terms of reference defining their purpose, membership, key objectives and outcomes. The terms of reference will be reviewed periodically by the Otago Chief Executives Forum and not less than every 18 months. Participation in such working groups is made possible with the support of participants' employers.
29. The Otago Mayoral Forum secretariat provides support and advice for working groups and collaborative activity as needed.

Partnership with Kāi Tahu ki Otago

30. Te Rōpū Taiao Otago is the formal structure supporting the partnership between Kāi Tahu ki Otago and Otago's councils. Te Rōpū Taiao Otago operates under a separate charter.
31. Through Te Rōpū Taiao Otago, Otago's councils and Kāi Tahu ki Otago representatives build regional relationships, identify shared priorities and share information. Meetings are typically scheduled alongside those of the Otago Mayoral Forum.
32. This partnership complements the many other iwi relationships and agreements maintained by individual councils.

Support and resourcing

33. The Parties acknowledge that Otago's cross-council framework depends on the participation and commitment of mayors, councillors and staff across all Otago councils. The rewards from working together increase with participation and engagement.
34. The Otago Regional Council hosts a permanent secretariat to support and advise the Otago Mayoral Forum, Otago Chief Executives Forum, Te Rōpū Taiao Otago and cross-council working groups, and to facilitate collaboration across Otago's local authorities as needed. The secretariat also holds a small discretionary budget to facilitate the Forums' work.
35. The Parties recognise the value of dedicated regional support roles, including the Otago Regional Waste Officer and other jointly-funded positions as may be established from time to time.

Section 16 of the Local Government Act 2002

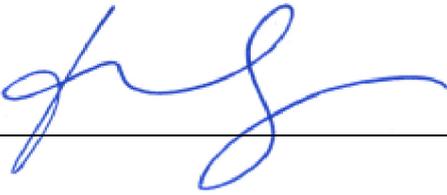
36. A triennial agreement must include a statement of the process by which the local authorities will comply with section 16 of the Local Government Act 2002 in respect of proposals for new regional council activities. This section fulfils this requirement.
37. If a regional council or a regional council-controlled organisation proposes to undertake a significant new activity AND one or more territorial authority is/are already undertaking the significant new activity or have notified their intention to do so in their long-term plans, the following process will apply:
- a. The regional council will advise all territorial authorities of the proposal and its reasons.
 - b. Territorial authorities may provide comments or objections.
 - c. The councils will seek to reach agreement through discussion.
 - d. If agreement is not reached, either party may seek mediation by an agreed mediator or, if needed, by a process specified by the Minister of Local Government.
 - e. If mediation is unsuccessful, either party may ask the Minister to make a binding decision.
38. New activity does not include an activity authorised by or under an enactment. Section 16 does not apply to a proposal by a regional council to establish, own, or operate a park for the benefit of its region; or a proposal to transfer responsibilities; or a proposal to transfer bylaw-making powers; or a reorganisation under Schedule 3 being 'reorganisation of local authorities'; or a proposal to undertake an activity or enter into an undertaking jointly with the Crown.

Variation and Review

39. This Agreement remains in force until it is replaced by a new Otago Local Authorities Triennial Agreement following the next local elections.
40. It may be varied at any time by agreement between the Parties.
41. The Agreement will be reviewed by the Otago Chief Executives Forum and Otago Mayoral Forum at the conclusion of the triennium, and a new Otago Local Authorities Triennial Agreement proposed for consideration following the next local elections.

Signatories

42. This Agreement is signed by the following on behalf of their local authority:

Council and signatory	Signature	Date
Mayor Tamah Alley Central Otago District Council		26/02/2026
Mayor Jock Martin Clutha District Council		
Mayor Sophie Barker Dunedin City Council		
Chair Hilary Calvert Otago Regional Council		
Mayor John Glover Queenstown Lakes District Council		
Mayor Melanie Tavendale Waitaki District Council		

Date: 6 March 2026

Drafted by: Marianna Brook, Principal Advisor, Mayoral Forum Secretariat

Otago Mayoral Forum terms of reference

Purpose

1. This paper invites the Forum to review and adopt a terms of reference for the triennium.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Otago Mayoral Forum:
 - a. **Reviews and adopts** the attached Otago Mayoral Forum Terms of Reference 2026–28 (updated if necessary); and
 - b. **Notes** that the terms of reference give effect to the Otago Local Authorities' Triennial Agreement 2026–29.

Background

3. In each of the last two trienniums, the triennial agreement has incorporated a terms of reference for the Otago Mayoral Forum. This is reflective of the remainder of the agreement, which predominantly discussed Mayoral Forum matters.
4. The 2026-29 triennial agreement takes a broader perspective, emphasising the full set of meetings and arrangements that enable Councils to work together in Otago. A practical outcome of this approach is separate terms of reference for the Mayoral Forum and the CE Forum, rather than having these contained within the agreement. This gives space and formality to the many other ways Otago's councils work together.
5. A separate terms of reference also provides flexibility by allowing the Forum to update the document as needed.

Proposed Terms of Reference 2026-28

6. Attached is a proposed terms of reference for the current triennium. This draws on the Forum's current practice, a discussion at the inaugural meeting in December 2025, and elements of the recently-ratified triennial agreement

Next Steps

7. The Forum terms of references is to be reviewed, updated (if required) and adopted at today's meeting.

Otago Mayoral Forum – Terms of Reference

Approved: [date]

Purpose

1. The Otago Mayoral Forum provides shared leadership, coordination, and advocacy for the Otago region. It forms part of Otago’s cross-council partnership framework, which enables councils to communicate, coordinate and collaborate.

Membership

2. The Forum comprises the Mayors of Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Waitaki District Council, Dunedin City Council, Clutha District Council, and the Chair of the Otago Regional Council.
3. Each member is supported by their Chief Executive.
4. Where a member cannot attend, they may nominate an alternate. Members should advise the Chair in advance.

Chairing

5. The Forum will elect a Chair at its first meeting following local elections, with an optional review after 18 months.
6. The Chair provides leadership and coordination to support the effective operation of the Forum. The Chair’s responsibilities include:
 - a. Presiding over meetings and ensuring they are conducted efficiently and inclusively.
 - b. Acting as spokesperson for the Forum, including engagement with Ministers, government agencies, stakeholders and the media.
 - c. Supporting progress between meetings by championing and facilitating the Forum’s work programme.
 - d. Engaging with external participants invited to Forum meetings.
 - e. Working with the secretariat on agendas, meeting papers and administrative matters.
7. The Chair will keep members informed of relevant developments and may convene additional or informal meetings when useful.

Meetings

8. Meetings will be held at a frequency agreed by members. Five meetings have been scheduled in 2026.
9. The Forum will aim to rotate meeting locations across the Otago region.
10. A quorum is four members.

Decision-Making

11. The Forum will operate by consensus wherever possible, reflecting the collaborative purpose of the cross-council framework. Where consensus cannot be reached, matters may be deferred, clarified, or escalated to Otago's councils as appropriate.

Functions

12. In accordance with the Otago Local Authorities' Triennial Agreement 2026–29, the Forum is responsible for:
 - a. Confirming regional focus areas and a direction of travel for each.
 - b. Receiving advice and reports from the Otago Chief Executives Forum on progress, opportunities for collaboration, work programmes and projects.
 - c. Overseeing a regional response to agreed focus areas through the cross-council partnership framework, escalating matters to councils as needed.
 - d. Formalising shared positions through letters of support, submissions and public statements as appropriate.
13. These functions sit within the wider cross-council framework, which collectively enables collaboration, joint work programmes, and shared approaches to issues of regional significance.

Partnership with Kāi Tahu ki Otago

14. The Forum participates in the partnership with Kāi Tahu ki Otago through Te Rōpū Taiao Otago, which builds relationships, identifies shared priorities and shares information. Meetings are typically scheduled alongside the Forum.

Secretariat

15. The Otago Regional Council hosts a permanent secretariat to support the Forum, including coordination, advice, and preparation of meeting materials. The Forum secretariat provides similar support for the Otago Chief Executives Forum and cross-council working groups as needed.

Communications

16. The Forum has a dedicated website at www.otagomayors.org.nz.
17. The secretariat will publish Forum agendas on the website shortly after each meeting, accompanied by a summary of key discussions and decisions. Members are encouraged to share this information with council colleagues according to their own processes.

Otago Mayoral Forum
Te Rōpū Taiao Otago
Otago CE Forum

Meeting locations – 2026

	Otago CE Forum	Otago Mayoral Forum (and Te Rōpū Taiao Otago)
Friday 30 January	Queenstown	
Friday 6 March		Dunedin (+ TRT)
Friday 24 April	Balclutha	
Friday 22 May		Queenstown
Friday 12 June	Cromwell	
Friday 3 July		Oamaru (+ TRT)
Friday 21 August	Dunedin	
Friday 18 September		Cromwell
Friday 16 October	Oamaru	
Friday 13 November		Balclutha (+ TRT)