

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, THIRD FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE WAITAKI DISTRICT
COUNCIL , 20 THAMES STREET, OAMARU
ON TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025 AT 9.00AM**

- PRESENT:** Mayor Gary Kircher, Deputy Mayor Hana Halalele, Cr Rebecca Ryan, Cr Jim Hopkins, Cr Tim Blackler, Cr Jeremy Holding, Cr Brent Cowles, Cr Guy Percival, Cr Courtney Linwood, Cr Jim Thomson, Cr John McCone (arrived online at 9.45am)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Alex Parmley (Chief Executive)
Lisa Baillie (Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Community Engagement and Experience)
Roger Cook (Director, Natural & Built Environment)
Paul Hope (Director, Support Services)
Joanne O'Neill (Director, Strategy, Performance & Design)
Amanda Nicholls (Finance Manager)
Simon Neale (Chairman, Performance, Audit and Risk Committee)
John Palethorpe (Media and Communications Specialist)
Jason Lilley (Livestream Support)
Arlene Goss (Governance Lead/Minutes)
Allyson Woock (Governance Services Officer)
- VISITORS:** Bryan Cadogan (Mayor of Clutha District)
Ben Bell (Mayor of Gore District)
Tamah Alley (Mayor of Central Otago District)
Stu Cross (Morrison Low) online
Andrew Strahan (Geoco) online
Marlon Bridge (DIA) online
Warren Ulusele (DIA) online
Andrew Ashton (Journalist with Otago Daily Times and Oamaru Mail)
David Wilson (mayoral candidate)
Melanie Tavendale (mayoral candidate)

[This meeting was recorded and can be watched here.](#)

The Chair declared the meeting open at 9.02am and welcomed everyone present.

1 APOLOGIES

RESOLVED WDC 2025/063

Moved: Deputy Mayor Hana Halalele

Seconded: Cr Jeremy Holding

That the apology from Cr John McCone be accepted.

CARRIED

Cr McCone was away on leave so an apology was accepted, however he attended online after this happened and was present from 9.45am until the end of the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 DECISION REPORTS

3.1 LOCAL WATER DONE WELL WATER SERVICES DELIVERY MODEL

[3.35](#) The chief executive acknowledged the Mayors of the Clutha, Central Otago and Gore districts in the room. He said it was great to see a spirit of partnership. He also acknowledged the work of staff and contractors at all councils.

Councils want to do the best for their communities but have under-invested in water services to keep rates low. The government was clear that higher standards needed to be met and this cost will not be paid by the government, but by the users of the water.

While Waitaki District has invested well in water in recent years, the idea that all our water schemes were alright was a myth. There was a need to maximise efficiency and minimise charges to the people of Waitaki. This decision will have long term impact on the community in years to come.

Recommendations had not been driven by any vested interest, but by a desire to provide the best outcome for the community.

The Mayor welcomed the Mayors in the room and said he appreciated their work to get to this point. Decisions would be made on this matter at Central Otago and Clutha on Thursday, and at Gore next Monday.

[14.05](#) Representatives from the Department of Internal Affairs joined the meeting online and were asked to provide an update. Marlon Bridge and Warren Ulusele introduced themselves.

They said if Council chose to go it alone and failed to meet the financial sustainability test, a crown facilitator would be appointed to work with Council. Another option would be a crown observer being appointed and this person would look across all of council finances. They would have the power to unilaterally pull money from other areas of council or lift rates to ensure sustainability.

The situation across the country was then outlined.

The councillors asked questions about intergenerational outcomes, whether a deferred approach would be acceptable, and what would happen if a decision was made to continue with an in-house approach.

Cr John McCone joined the meeting online at 9.45am from overseas.

The Mayor asked how comments from submitters have been included in the decision making. Full copies of the submissions are attached to the agenda of this meeting, with a summary also included.

Is there any legislation that requires submissions to be treated as a referendum. No.

The chief executive said he had taken legal advice on the weight that should be given to public consultation. He read out a statement from this legal advice clarifying that public submissions did not carry more weight than other sources of information such as expert advice.

One of the concerns raised by submitters was the loss of local control. All solutions involved a loss of local control because of new powers given to the Commerce Commission and Taumata Arowai.

There is no status quo in this case. It was going to be a very different environment no matter what was decided.

[52:46](#) The Mayor moved the staff recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Cr Hopkins. The Mayor then read from a prepared statement giving his reasons for supporting the collaborative approach.

Each councillor was then given an opportunity to speak.

[1:00:20](#) Deputy Mayor Halalele spoke against the motion.

[1:02:26](#) Cr Linwood spoke against the motion.

[1:03:58](#) Cr Holding spoke against the motion.

[1:04:46](#) Cr Thomson spoke against the motion.

[1:06:37](#) Cr Ryan spoke against the motion.

[1:09:13](#) Cr Cowles spoke against the motion.

[1:12:48](#) Cr Hopkins spoke in support of the motion.

[1:22:55](#) Cr Percival spoke against the motion.

[1:24:57](#) Cr Blackler spoke against the motion.

[1:30:17](#) Cr McCone spoke against the motion.

The Mayor exercised his right of reply. He said this was not a rushed decision. It had been at least six years in the making and was a 50-plus year decision. He wanted to keep water affordable for all ratepayers across the district.

The Morrison Low report was modelling a \$100 saving per household in the first year, increasing each year, if the collaborative approach was taken.

The rates rises involved in remaining in-house were going to impact people severely, and people on lower incomes just could not afford it.

He recognised the councillors were making decisions based on imperfect information regarding all the options, but this was the nature of it. They were elected to make decisions and short-term decision-making by councils had led to the current position.

The debt headroom was an issue because in 10- or 20- years' time there were bridges to replace and there wouldn't be enough debt headroom available to do this work. He was concerned about this and said this was his motivation to get the best deal for the community.

He then called for a vote and Cr Thomson asked for a division.

RESOLVED WDC 2025/064

Moved: Mayor Gary Kircher

Seconded: Cr Jim Hopkins

That Council:

1. Agrees to adopt a Jointly Owned Council Controlled Organisation as the Council's model for the delivery of water services in accordance with section 13(1)(k) of the Local Government (Water services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024
2. Requests staff to prepare a Water Services Delivery Plan containing the matters set out in section 13 of the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024 and the Council's chosen proposed water services delivery model, to be brought back to Council for approval and certification by the Waitaki District Council Chief Executive prior to being submitted to the Department of Internal Affairs by 3 September 2025 for acceptance.

3. Agrees to establish a Jointly Owned Council Controlled Organisation with Central Otago, Clutha and Gore Councils.
4. Notes the submissions received and thanks all submitters for their feedback.

In Favour: Cr Jim Hopkins and Mayor Gary Kircher

Against: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Hana Halalele, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

LOST 2/9

Cr Blackler called for an alternative motion (below) to be put on the screen in the chambers and moved this motion, with Cr Linwood seconding.

[1:39:03](#) Cr Blackler then spoke in support of the alternative motion.

Cr Hopkins asked for some amendments. These were:

Amendment 1 – Add the words “for a minimum of two years” to the first motion.

Amendment 2 – Add the words “for consideration” to the second motion.

Amendment 3 – Remove the words “not to relitigate the decisions above, but rather” from the fourth motion.

That Council:

1. Agrees to adopt an enhanced in-house water services delivery unit **for a minimum of two years** as the Council's model for the delivery of water services in accordance with section 13(1)(k) of the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024.
2. Requests staff to prepare a Water Services Delivery Plan that complies with matters set out in section 13 of the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024 and the Council's chosen proposed water services delivery model, to be brought back to Council **for consideration**, approval and certification by the Waitaki District Council Chief Executive prior to being submitted to the Department of Internal Affairs by 3 September 2025 for acceptance.
3. Will exercise its right to exit the joint arrangement with Central Otago, Clutha and Gore under the current commitment agreement.
4. Agrees to further discuss details surrounding the future management of water at another time and requests staff to prepare an outline with input from Elected Members for a workshop to that effect.
For clarity, this future discussion is ~~not to relitigate the decisions above, but rather~~ to explore key issues or themes raised through the consultation and investigation to date. It would also include looking at the various models adopted by other councils and highlighting matters for further investigation and focus - including exploring the feasibility of a future shared services/Joint CCO approach with South Canterbury Councils.
5. Notes the public submissions received and thanks all submitters for their feedback.

[2:08:27](#) Cr Blackler said he was opposed to these amendments, so the Mayor called for a vote on each amendment individually. All three were agreed by majority vote.

RESOLVED WDC 2025/065

Moved: Cr Jim Hopkins

Seconded: Mayor Gary Kircher

That the words “for a minimum of two years” be added to motion number one as above.

CARRIED

RESOLVED WDC 2025/066

Moved: Cr Jim Hopkins

Seconded: Mayor Gary Kircher

That the words “for consideration” be added to motion number two as above.

CARRIED

RESOLVED WDC 2025/067

Moved: Cr Jim Hopkins

Seconded: Mayor Gary Kircher

That the words “not to relitigate the decisions above, but rather” be deleted from motion number 4 as above.

CARRIED

[2:10:34](#) The Mayor then spoke to the substantive motion and gave his reasons for opposing it. This included the need for future water rates to be affordable.

[2:15:15](#) Cr Holding spoke in support of the motion.

[2:16:16](#) Cr Cowles spoke in support of the motion.

[2:18:01](#) Cr Ryan spoke in support of the motion.

[2:19:57](#) Cr Blackler responded and the Mayor called for a vote. Cr Thomson asked for a division.

RESOLVED WDC 2025/068

Moved: Cr Tim Blackler

Seconded: Cr Courtney Linwood

That Council:

1. Agrees to adopt an enhanced in-house water services delivery unit for a minimum of two years as the Council’s model for the delivery of water services in accordance with section 13(1)(k) of the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024.

In Favour: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Jim Hopkins, Hana Halalele, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

Against: Mayor Gary Kircher

CARRIED 10/1

2. Requests staff to prepare a Water Services Delivery Plan that complies with matters set out in section 13 of the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024 and the Council’s chosen proposed water services delivery model, to be brought back to Council for consideration, approval and certification by the Waitaki District Council Chief Executive prior to being submitted to the Department of Internal Affairs by 3 September 2025 for acceptance.

In Favour: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Jim Hopkins, Hana Halalele, Gary Kircher, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

Against: Nil

CARRIED 11/0

3. Will exercise its right to exit the joint arrangement with Central Otago, Clutha and Gore under the current commitment agreement.

In Favour: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Hana Halalele, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

Against: Crs Jim Hopkins and Mayor Gary Kircher

CARRIED 9/2

4. Agrees to further discuss details surrounding the future management of water at another time and requests staff to prepare an outline with input from Elected Members for a workshop to that effect. For clarity, this future discussion is to explore key issues or themes raised through the consultation and investigation to date. It would also include looking at the various models adopted by other councils and highlighting matters for further investigation and focus - including exploring the feasibility of a future shared services/Joint CCO approach with South Canterbury Councils.

In Favour: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Jim Hopkins, Hana Halalele, Gary Kircher, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

Against: Nil

CARRIED 11/0

5. Notes the public submissions received and thanks all submitters for their feedback.

In Favour: Crs Guy Percival, Courtney Linwood, John McCone, Jim Thomson, Rebecca Ryan, Jim Hopkins, Hana Halalele, Gary Kircher, Tim Blackler, Jeremy Holding and Brent Cowles

Against: Nil

CARRIED 11/0

[2:23:26](#) The Mayor then moved a further motion as below and it was seconded by Cr Hopkins. He gave his reasons for adding this to the list of resolutions, which included the need to get a better understanding of the complexity and challenges.

Cr Ryan asked for an amendment to include keeping councillors regularly updated. The words "and regular updates" were added.

[2:26:18](#) Cr Hopkins spoke in support of the motion.

RESOLVED WDC 2025/069

Moved: Mayor Gary Kircher

Seconded: Cr Jim Hopkins

That Council instructs staff to provide clarity to the community and regular updates as immediately as possible, on how much more the in-house options will cost them over the joint Southern Group CCO, according to the most up-to-date modelling available.

CARRIED

The Mayor noted a disrespectful comment that was made earlier in the meeting regarding the other three councils. Cr Blackler said he was withdrawing the comment and apologising. The Mayor thanked everyone for their work.

[2:30:51](#) The Chief Executive then outlined the next steps in this process.

4 MEETING CLOSE

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 11.32am.

TO BE CONFIRMED at the Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 29 July 2025.

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CHAIRPERSON