

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Queenstown Lakes District Council held in the Council Chambers, 10 Gorge Road, Queenstown on Monday 3 August 2026 commencing at 11.00am

Membership:

Mayor John Glover; Councillor Gavin Bartlett, Councillor Samuel 'Q' Belk, Councillor Stephen Brent,* Councillor Heath Copland, Councillor Niki Gladding*, Councillor Nicola King, Councillor Jon Mitchell, Councillor Quentin Smith, Councillor Cody Tucker, Councillor Melissa White, Councillor Matthew Wong

Attendees:

Michelle Morss (Interim Chief Executive), Dave Wallace (General Manager, Planning & Development)*, Pennie Pearce (General Manager, Strategy & Planning – Acting), Anita Vanstone (Strategic Growth Manager), Jon Winterbottom (Democracy Services Manager), Ben Scott (Web and Digital Communications Advisor), Jane Robertson (Senior Democracy Services Advisor); one member of the media and approximately three members of the public

*Online

Apologies/Leave of Absence Applications

There were no apologies.

The following new requests for a leave of absence were made:

- Councillor Gladding: 10-15 September 2026
- Councillor Wong: 25-30 September 2026

It was moved (The Mayor, Councillor White):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve that the requests for leave of absence be approved.

Motion carried unanimously.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No declarations were made.

Public Forum

1. Pierre Marasti

Mr Marasti noted that climate and ecological collapse was already occurring, citing increased severe storm frequency in New Zealand and major global declines in wildlife populations. He highlighted evidence of biodiversity loss, including a sharp fall in the number of insects,

which were essential to ecosystems. Human-made materials now outweighed earth's biomass and plastic pollution exceeded the weight of all animals.

Focusing on New Zealand, a 2025 report from Ministry for the Environment report showed many native species were threatened (including birds, reptiles, bats and frogs). Mr Marasti urged Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) to consider environmental protection when deciding on an amalgamation plan, as environmental safeguards were essential for long-term human wellbeing.

2. Anna Gillespie, Federated Farmers Otago Provincial President

Ms Gillespie stated that Federated Farmers Otago strongly supported Queenstown Lakes, Central Otago and Clutha District Councils working together to develop a Provincial Otago Unitary Authority. This was a rare opportunity to create governance arrangements that reflected shared economic, environmental and community interests across provincial Otago.

Federated Farmers Otago considered that local government should be based on communities of interest and it supported a model that balanced local representation with the scale needed to deliver services and infrastructure. It opposed a single Otago-wide authority that included Dunedin city, as this could result in rural communities becoming underrepresented within a predominantly urban council.

A provincial unitary authority could improve efficiency, reduce duplication and strengthen accountability, while protecting rural representation, retaining local decision-making and better integrating environmental management, infrastructure investment and economic development across the region.

Confirmation of Agenda

The Mayor explained that considering item 1 later in the meeting would allow QLDC to have regard to any decision made earlier in the day by the Dunedin City Council (DCC).

It was moved (The Mayor, Councillor Mitchell):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve that the agenda be confirmed with the Council agreeing:

- a. To add the addendum to the Head Start report (item 1) entitled 'Head Start Option 4 Supplementary Councils of Otago Region'; the reason it was not on the agenda is that the new Head Start proposal was received after the agenda had been published; and
- b. To swap the order of agenda items 1 and 2 and consider item 2 first in the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Mayor advised that the addendum could not be delayed until a future meeting because it was relevant to item 1 on the agenda ('Head Start – Council Amalgamation Next Steps') and it would not be logical to delay its consideration.

Resolution to Exclude the Public

It was moved (The Mayor, Councillor White):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve that the public be excluded from the following parts of the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The general subject of each matter to be considered whilst the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

Agenda items

Item 2: Approving the Regional Deal

General subject to be considered.	Reason for passing this resolution.	Grounds under Section 7 for the passing of this resolution.
Item 2: Approving the Regional Deal	That the public conduct of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information where the withholding of information is necessary to: <i>Section and Grounds</i> 7(2)(i) to enable any local authority holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations) It is important to retain confidentiality to prevent premature public commentary ahead of the joint announcement, which could disadvantage the partner councils.	Section 7(2)(i)

General subject to be considered.	Reason for passing this resolution.	Grounds under Section 7 for the passing of this resolution.
	<i>Public Interest Statement</i> While there is public interest in the development of a Regional Deal, this is outweighed ensuring that the partner councils' position is not disadvantaged and to protect the integrity of the negotiations.	

This recommendation is made in reliance on Section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by Section 6 or Section 7 of that Act or Section 6 or Section 7 or Section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982 as the case may require, which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are as shown above with respect to each item.

The meeting went into public excluded at 11.15am.

The meeting resumed in public at 12.38pm.

1. **Head Start – Council Amalgamation Next Steps**

A report from Michelle Morss (Interim Chief Executive) sought Council's direction in relation to the government's Head Start (Council amalgamation) process.

Michelle Morss presented the report. She reported that earlier in the morning, the Dunedin City Council (DCC) had voted in favour of twin unitary authorities which was a catchment based proposal and QLDC would need to mirror exactly the language used by DCC if it wanted to support this Head Start proposal. The resolution from DCC was shared in hard copy with the QLDC.

She noted that, unusually, her report had made no recommendation but there was no time before the deadline for Head Start proposals on 9 August 2026 to develop an alternative option with another council because all other councils in the region had already had their meetings. Accordingly, the options available to QLDC were to (a) do nothing; (b) support the DCC proposal; or (c) support the Central Otago District Council (CODC) and Clutha District Council (CDC) proposal (which would still go ahead as a compliant proposal regardless of QLDC support because it had the support of CODC and CDC). The QLDC opting to remain as a single standalone council was not an option.

There was discussion about whether the current boundary lines of the existing councils in the region could be changed as part of the amalgamation process. The Interim Chief Executive advised that she would expect a boundary review to be part of the detailed design process.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

1. **Note** the contents of this report and its attachments;
2. **Agree** that QLDC does not support a unitary authority comprising QLDC, Central Otago District Council and Clutha District Council and:
 - a. **Instruct** the Chief Executive to prepare a letter to Minister Bishop to this effect.
 - b. **Authorise** the Mayor to sign the abovementioned letter, subject to the review of all Councillors.
3. **Agree** to work with Dunedin City Council to develop and submit a Head Start proposal in support of a **Two Unitary Catchment Based** model comprising:
 - a. **Inland Otago Unitary Authority;** and
 - b. **Coastal Otago Unitary Authority,**with regional council functions supported through an appropriate shared services arrangement;
4. **Request** staff to develop the Head Start proposal in conjunction with Dunedin City Council staff;
5. **Authorise** the Mayor to sign and submit the Head Start proposal following circulation of the final draft to all Councillors.
6. **Note** that QLDC will continue to partner with Ngāi Tahu during the detailed design phases that will follow.

Amendment

It was moved (Councillor Smith, Councillor White):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to amend part 2(a) of the resolution to read:

- a. **Instruct the Chief Executive to prepare a letter to Minister Bishop and the Mayors of Central Otago**

District Council and Clutha District Council to this effect.

Motion carried with Councillor Bartlett, Councillor Copland and Councillor Wong recording their votes against the motion.

The amendment became part of the substantive motion.

A request was made to take part (2) of the resolution separately.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

2. **Agree** that QLDC does not support a unitary authority comprising QLDC, Central Otago District Council and Clutha District Council and:
 - a. **Instruct** the Chief Executive to prepare a letter to Minister Bishop and the Mayors of Central Otago District Council and Clutha District Council to this effect.
 - b. **Authorise** the Mayor to sign the abovementioned letter, subject to the review of all Councillors.

The motion was carried.

The Mayor advised that he would take each remaining part of the resolution separately.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

1. **Note** the contents of this report and its attachments;

Motion carried unanimously.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

3. **Agree** to work with Dunedin City Council to develop and submit a Head Start proposal in support of a **Two Unitary Catchment Based** model comprising:

a. **Inland Otago Unitary Authority;** and

b. **Coastal Otago Unitary Authority,**

with regional council functions supported through an appropriate shared services arrangement;

Motion carried, with Councillor Copland voting against the motion.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

4. **Request** staff to develop the Head Start proposal in conjunction with Dunedin City Council staff;

Motion carried, with Councillor Copland voting against the motion.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

5. **Authorise** the Mayor to sign and submit the Head Start proposal following circulation of the final draft to all Councillors.

Motion carried, with Councillor Copland voting against the motion.

It was moved (Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Belk):

That the Queenstown Lakes District Council resolve to:

6. **Note** that QLDC will continue to partner with Ngāi Tahu during the detailed design phases that will follow.

Motion carried, with Councillor Copland voting against the motion.

The meeting concluded at 2.05pm.

Confirmed as a true and correct record:

M A Y O R

D A T E