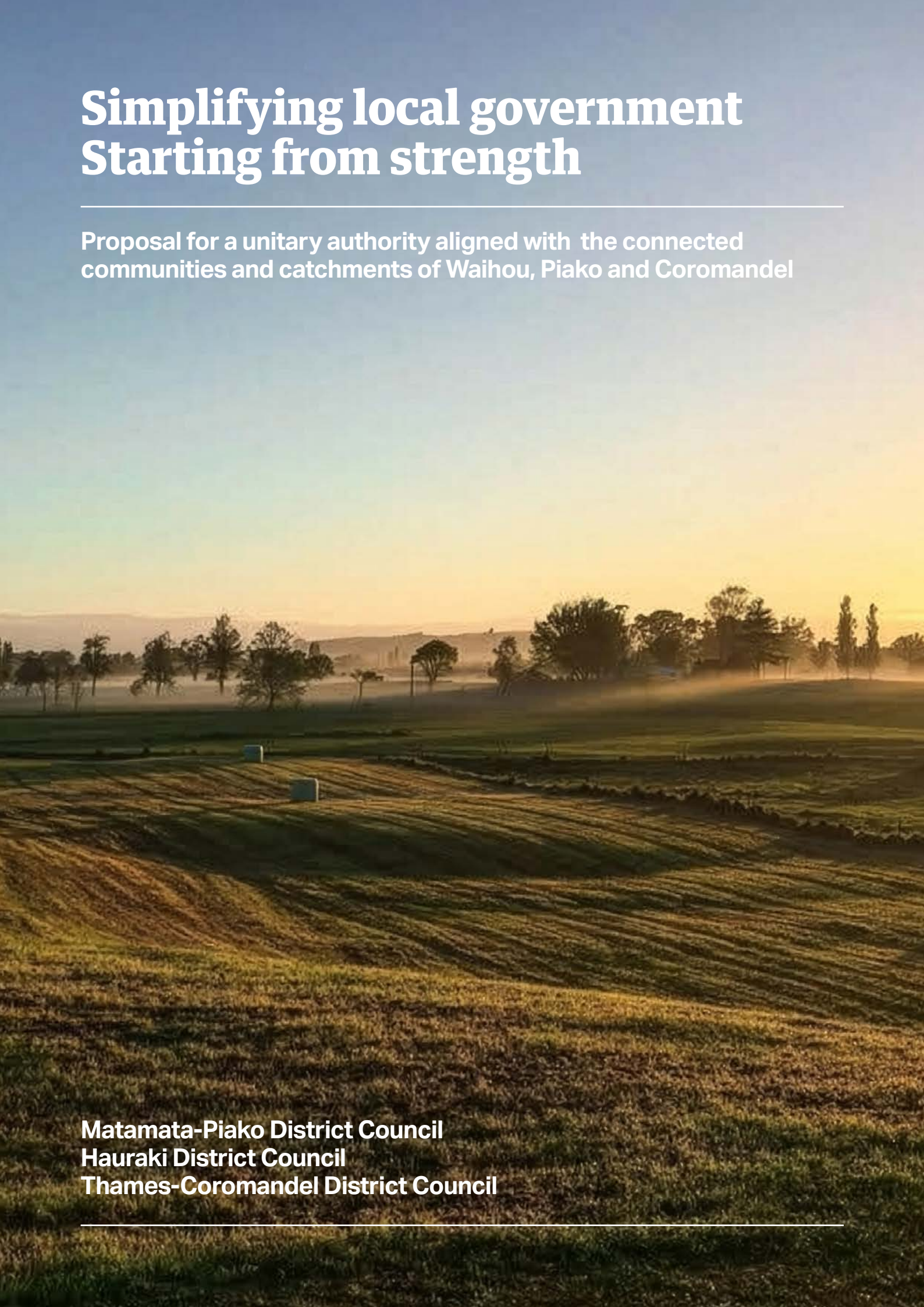
Simplifying local government
Starting from strength

Proposal for a unitary authority aligned with the connected communities and catchments of Waihou, Piako and Coromandel



Matamata-Piako District Council
Hauraki District Council
Thames-Coromandel District Council

Contents

Opening

Mayoral foreword 4

Executive summary 5

Proposal at a glance 6

The proposed authority

Eligibility and affected parties 8

Assessment against the five criteria

Supporting the new planning system 10

Simplifying local governance 12

Achieving economies of scale 14

Maintaining local voice 16

Deliverability 18

Treaty relationships and iwi relationships 20

Wider Waikato effects 22

Decision sought 24

Appendices 26

te kaunihera ā-rohe o matamata-piako district council

HAURAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL

THAMES COROMANDEL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mayoral foreword

What connects us is greater than what separates us

That belief sits at the heart of this proposal for a Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority.

Our rivers begin in the ranges, flow through productive farmland, sustain thriving communities and ultimately reach Tīkapa Moana - the Hauraki Gulf. Our people move across district boundaries every day to work, learn, visit family and enjoy the places that make this part of New Zealand so special. Many of the challenges we face - growth, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, resilience and affordability – are also shared.

This Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel proposal is a unique opportunity to shape a future that better reflects these connections.

Importantly, this proposal starts from strength.

It builds on long-standing relationships between our councils, aligns with existing catchment and Hauraki Gulf initiatives, and recognises the enduring partnerships that exist with iwi and hapū across our shared area.

We know there is much more work to do.

Acceptance into the Government's Head Start programme would mark the beginning - not the end - of that conversation. Detailed design will be undertaken with communities, iwi, neighbouring councils and Government to ensure any future arrangements are practical, affordable and reflect the aspirations of the people we serve.

We believe the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary proposal offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a stronger, more resilient and more locally responsive future for our communities.

We commend this proposal to the Government and look forward to working together on the next stage of its development.

Mayor Ash Tanner

Mayor Peter Revell

Mayor Toby Adams

Executive summary

New Zealand's planning and local government reforms will reshape how places evolve, grow, manage environmental pressures and invest for decades to come.

A Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority would establish a coherent governing approach for the sub-region. It would bring together decisions about community services, growth, infrastructure and the environment, and provide the organisational capability to coordinate investment, retain specialist expertise and respond to increasingly complex demands. Statutory local boards would keep defined decisions close to communities and protect the distinct identities and priorities of the places the authority serves.

This proposal seeks the scale that best fits the task, improving strategic and efficient sub-regional decision-making while maintaining local voice.

The proposal would also strengthen a much-needed focus on the Hauraki Gulf, a national taonga whose overall health has declined for several decades. The proposed authority would enable closer alignment with the Pare Hauraki settlement and Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari, the country's first marine spatial plan.

A Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority offers that combination.

The unitary authority would remain part of an interconnected Waikato, participating in cross regional spatial planning and shared arrangements wherever collective action is required. Its design would be developed with affected iwi, hapū and post-settlement governance entities so that Treaty settlement arrangements and established relationships continue with the same or equivalent effect.

Cabinet agreement would enable councils and affected parties, supported by government, to complete the detailed design and establish the authority at the 2028 local elections, followed by full operational integration by 1 July 2030. The result would be clearer responsibility for the future of Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel, stronger capability to lead through the changes ahead, and meaningful accountability to the communities it serves.

1. Proposal at a glance

"Our local council know the needs/wishes of the local people and if they are already working together with other councils then decisions remain closer to home"

Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Councils propose establishing the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority.

The proposed boundary would encompass the three existing districts and the adjacent coastal marine area.

The proposal brings together communities connected through catchments, infrastructure, transport, labour markets and shared provincial interests. It would align responsibility for the Waihou and Piako catchments and the interconnected Coromandel environmental systems more closely with the land, natural ecosystems infrastructure and people affected by regional decision-making. These natural ecosystems include Kopuatai and the Hauraki Gulf. This alignment would support collective governance from the catchment headwaters through productive land and downstream settlements to Tīkapa Moana/Hauraki Gulf which is shared with Auckland.

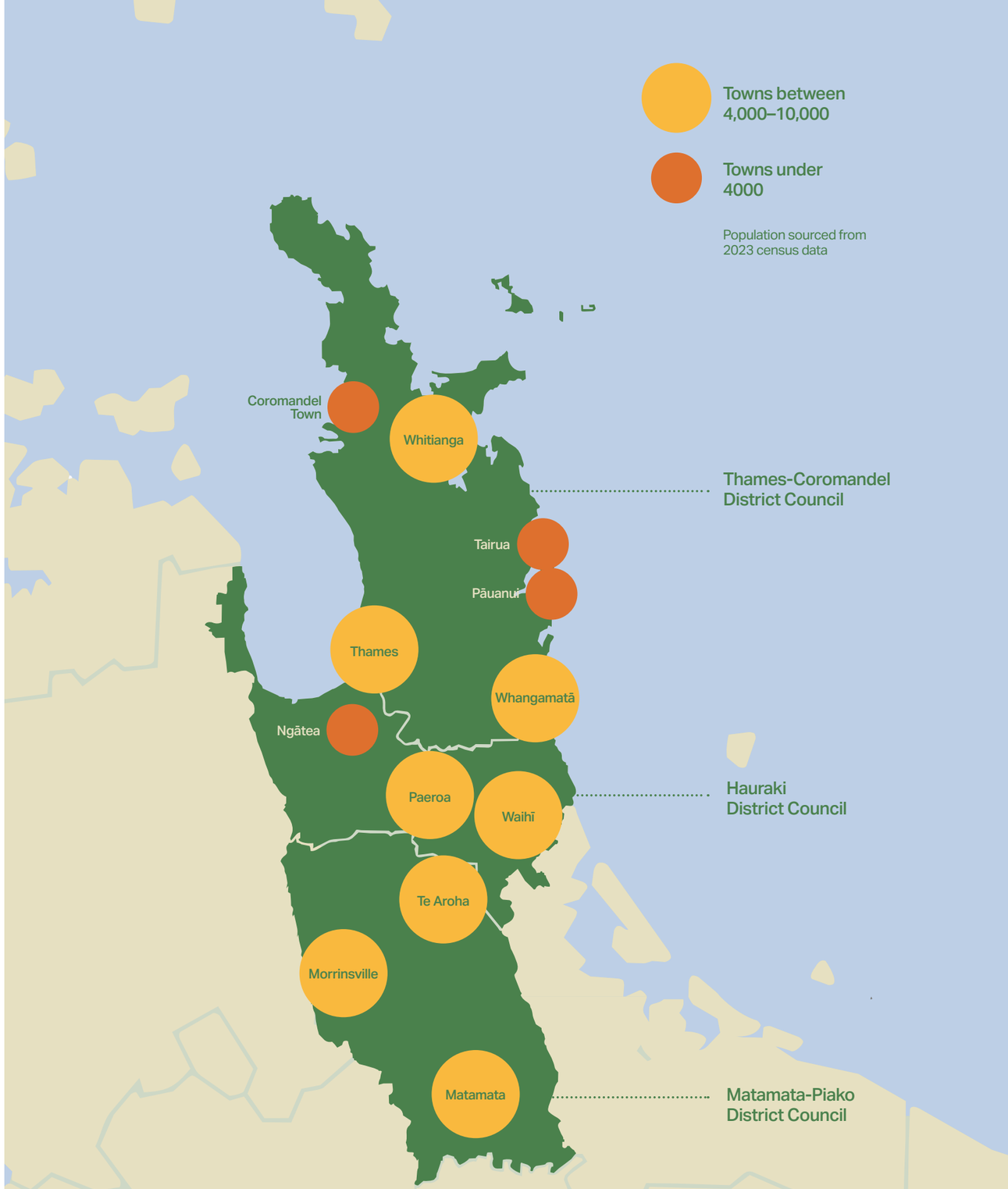
A mayor elected at large and a governing council of 12 to 15 members would make decisions requiring coordination across the wider area. Four to six directly elected statutory local boards would make decisions on specified local matters within their communities of interest.

This model would combine strategic and organisational scale, with meaningful decision-making close to the distinct provincial, rural and coastal communities it would serve.

Regional spatial planning, transport and cross-boundary environmental matters would be managed through a coordinated approach with other Waikato authorities. Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari, the marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf, will be delivered in collaboration with the Auckland Council and the Hauraki Gulf Forum. Future integration of water services arrangements is still being considered.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the three proposing councils sets out the principles guiding this proposal. These principles address local voice, affordability, iwi and hapū relationships, fair treatment of historic assets and liabilities, gradual rates harmonisation and long-term organisational resilience.

A government-enabled detailed design process would confirm the boundary, allocation of governance responsibilities and transition arrangements. The process would involve affected councils, iwi and hapū, local communities and other interested parties.



2. Eligibility and affected parties

"East Waikato is presently the most supportable option because it offers a balance of scale, efficiency and local representation while avoiding dominance by a large metropolitan area. Support is conditional on safeguards."

Eligibility

The three proposing councils (Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako) represent the majority of the directly affected territorial authorities.

Appendix 1 contains the formal council resolutions and the Memorandum of Understanding.

Under the proposal, the transfer of regional functions, assets, liabilities, staff and statutory responsibilities within the new boundary would affect the Waikato Regional Council.

The three councils designed the proposal to operate as part of a wider Waikato system comprising more than one unitary authority. This would allow unitary authorities to organise their functions around connected catchments and communities, while formal joint arrangements maintain coordination on matters requiring a Waikato-wide approach. Section 5 sets out the sub-regional case for this model, including its potential effects.

Council positions

Council	Position and material interest
Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Councils	Formal resolutions of each and Memorandum of Understanding are provided in Appendix 1
Waikato Regional Council position and material interest	Directly affected by the proposed transfer of regional functions, assets, liabilities, staff and statutory responsibilities within the new boundary.

Possible boundary adjustments affecting catchments straddling the boundaries of the current Matamata-Piako and Hauraki districts warrant consideration. Consistent with the Government's stated catchment-based approach, the proposal supports targeted adjustments where these would improve alignment between administrative and catchment boundaries. Other Waikato territorial authorities also have interests in regional planning, transport, infrastructure, shared services and environmental matters extending beyond the proposed authority.

Formal council positions are included in Appendix 1, with preliminary effects on affected councils and shared arrangements assessed in Appendix 6.

The proposal is based on the three districts identified and does not depend on other territorial authorities joining. If another council subsequently sought inclusion, that would require agreement, supporting evidence, an assessment of the effects and a further government decision through detailed design or the applicable statutory process.

Parties and stakeholders

The proposed area overlaps with the rohe and areas of interest of Pare Hauraki, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Hauā, Raukawa and Ngāti Hinerangi. Iwi authorities, hapū, post-settlement governance entities and the Crown have interests arising from Treaty settlements, statutory relationships, natural resources, representation and the proposed transfer of regional functions. These matters are addressed in Section 4.

Other affected parties include central government agencies, councils, council-controlled and shared-service organisations, council staff, ratepayers, infrastructure providers and the communities represented by the affected councils. Engagement undertaken to date, how it has influenced the proposal and further engagement required are set out in Appendix 1.

Proposed boundary

The proposed boundary, shown in Map 1 in Appendix 3, comprises the three district council areas and adjacent coastal marine area. Map 2 indicates possible boundary adjustments to better align with catchment boundaries. This is discussed further in Appendix 3.

3. Assessment against the five criteria

"The Eastern Waikato option offers the best chance to keep decisions closer to home, protect local voice and representation and allow MPDC to continue working with councils that are similar and already connected."

3.1 Supporting the new planning system

Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel would bring land-use and natural environment planning together within one authority. The authority would plan growth, infrastructure, freshwater, natural hazards and the coastal environment as connected parts of the same system, reducing fragmentation between regional and district processes and creating clearer accountability for decisions affecting the area.

Integrated planning within the new authority

Nationally and regionally significant road, rail, freight and tourism corridors connect the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel area with the wider Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Auckland. The proposed unitary authority would bring together local and regional planning responsibilities within its boundary and would continue to be part of an interconnected Waikato system. Transport networks, freight movements, labour markets, tourism, economic development and growth pressures extend beyond sub-regional boundaries and require coordinated planning across the wider Waikato and upper North Island.

A Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority would participate in joint governance arrangements with other Waikato unitary authorities for matters that are most effectively planned at a regional scale.

This would include a statutory Waikato Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Committee (or similar joint body) comprising elected members from participating authorities, iwi and hapū representatives, and relevant Crown agencies where appropriate. Such a body would provide oversight of regional spatial planning, transport strategy, major infrastructure corridors, emergency management, climate adaptation and other cross-boundary priorities.

The proposed unitary authority would also continue to implement the existing marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf, Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari, in collaboration with Auckland Council and the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

This approach would retain local decision-making and accountability for place-based matters while ensuring that regionally significant transport and growth issues continue to be planned and coordinated across the Waikato. Building on existing collaborative arrangements it would give the unitary authorities a formal way to coordinate work on wider Waikato issues, while each remains accountable to its local communities.

Aligning authority and environmental boundaries

The boundary would substantially align responsibility for the Waihou and Piako catchments and the interconnected Coromandel environmental systems within one authority. This would enable integrated catchment management with land management, biosecurity, land use, freshwater, flood protection, drainage, natural hazards and coastal planning to be considered together.

Further engagement and detailed design will be undertaken during the next stage to progress this. Detailed design would assess whether boundary adjustments or enduring cross-boundary arrangements would provide the better outcome. The full boundary rationale, maps and cross-boundary catchment assessment are provided in Appendix 3.

Protecting continuity

The three councils have spatial and natural environment planning work at different stages and would need to continue this work while establishing the new authority. Matamata-Piako and Hauraki councils are in the early stages of developing a 50-year Growth Strategy that will help inform the Regional Spatial Plan under the Planning Bill. Thames-Coromandel District Council is currently engaging stakeholders and the community on its spatial plan.

Existing councils would retain their statutory planning and regulatory responsibilities until the legal transfer of functions takes effect and the Government completes its planning reforms.

A coordinated transition programme would protect current planning work, evidence, data, systems, specialist capability and statutory relationships. It would align establishment of the new authority with Waikato-wide planning and provide interim arrangements for functions whose future location had not yet been settled.

Detailed design would confirm the governance arrangements for Waikato-wide spatial planning and other cross-boundary matters. It would also determine which planning, consenting, monitoring and regulatory functions would transfer, along with the evidence, data and systems supporting them. The transition programme may need interim compliance and enforcement arrangements if the Government has not settled the national model before the new authority begins operating.

As part of detailed design, opportunities for shared service delivery will be considered for highly specialised functions. This would allow participating authorities to maintain access to critical expertise while also recognising that some services may ultimately be centralised through future Government decisions.

These matters are addressed further in Appendix 6. Current planning-system progress, function-transfer requirements and regulatory continuity arrangements, and establishment are addressed in Appendix 6 and 7.

Trade-offs and risks

The principal trade-offs and risks are associated with undertaking planning reform and local government reorganisation at the same time.

These include uncertainty while the final national legislative framework is being developed, potential disruption to statutory planning and consenting processes, the complexity of integrating existing plans, data, systems and policies, ensuring that stronger unitary and regional consistency does not diminish appropriate place-based input and pressure on specialist staff.

These would need to be managed through phased implementation, clear transitional accountabilities and close coordination with central government.

3.2 Simplifying local governance

Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel would replace separate territorial and regional governance within its boundary with one unitary authority. Communities would have a clearer line of accountability for decisions about land use, infrastructure, environmental management and local services.

Clearer responsibilities

A mayor and governing council would make decisions requiring coordination across the authority, including strategy, regional functions, major infrastructure and organisation-wide funding. Statutory local boards would make specified decisions affecting their communities.

This allocation would provide greater clarity about where responsibility sits. It would also reduce duplication across governance, planning, reporting and organisational support while retaining local decision-making for community services and projects that do not require an authority-wide response.

Bringing functions and capability together would also provide greater scope to develop and test new approaches, share specialist expertise and apply successful service improvements across the authority. Statutory local boards would retain the ability to respond to the different needs of their communities.

Regional spatial planning, transport, water services, shared infrastructure and cross-boundary environmental matters would still require formal arrangements with other authorities and organisations. Simplification therefore means clearer responsibility and fewer internal boundaries, rather than removing the need for regional collaboration.

Design considerations

The governance model would create two elected levels within the authority – a governing council and statutory local boards.

The proposed governance and representation framework is provided in Appendix 2.

Detailed design would establish a transparent allocation of responsibilities, funding and accountability between the governing council and boards. It will also consider enabling legislation for representation based on rating units as well as resident population.

Detailed design would establish how authority-wide and local objectives are balanced, including who makes decisions and how local views are considered. These matters are addressed further in Appendix 6.

Resident and non-resident representation

The relationship between the rating base and resident population differ markedly across the three councils. In Thames-Coromandel around 50 per cent of ratepayers are not resident in the district. A representation model based on solely on resident population would not reflect the financial contribution and ongoing interests of this group.

The three councils recognise this and agree that the representation model must account for it in a fair way. This may require legislative change to enable representation based on rating units, or a hybrid of rating units and resident population. The detail will be developed in the next stage of this process.

Trade-offs and risks

The principal trade-off is between simplifying governance and retaining effective local decision-making, clear accountability and appropriate visibility of regional functions.

Potential risks include lack of clear boundaries between regional and local decision-making, regional functions becoming less visible, inconsistent delegations or accountability and disruption during the transition from existing governance arrangements.

These would need to be addressed during the detailed design stage, through a clear governance framework, disciplined committee design and transparent allocation of responsibilities. Appendix 6 sets out the related detailed-design priorities and transition requirements.

3.3 Achieving economies of scale

Preliminary analysis indicates that Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel would have sufficient operational and workforce scale to build a strong, fit-for-purpose unitary authority. Fixed costs and specialist capability would be spread across the larger organisation, reduce duplication and support coordinated investment across the connected provincial, rural and coastal communities it would serve.

Financial and organisational scale

Based on adjusted 2026/27 information, excluding water services the proposed authority would serve approximately 93,500 people across 57,280 rating units, with estimated annual revenue of $320.7 million and net assets of $3.703 billion (this figure excludes assets to transfer in from Waikato Regional Council, value currently unknown).

Efficiencies arise through consolidated governance, leadership and corporate functions, less duplication in planning, reporting, procurement and asset management, and greater purchasing and contracting scale.

This would increase the value gained from council expenditure by making specialist capability and organisational systems available across a wider area, coordinating investment and directing less resource towards duplicated work. A larger organisation would also have greater capacity to invest in innovation, test new approaches and apply successful service improvements across the authority.

The larger organisation is better placed to recruit and retain specialist planning, engineering, environmental, regulatory and project-delivery capability. Bringing regional and territorial responsibilities together enables the transport investment, catchment management, flood protection, land drainage and economic development to be planned around common priorities rather than through separate organisations and programmes.

Financial risks and detailed design

The preliminary figures do not establish the complete opening financial position. The councils have different rating systems, debt positions, service arrangements and investment priorities, and establishment would involve material one-off costs before longer-term benefits can be realised. These preliminary figures do however indicate significant borrowing capacity over the current total debt limit when combined into one entity.

Detailed design would establish the opening balance sheet, quantify transition costs and potential benefits, test rates and debt affordability, and determine the fair treatment of assets, reserves and historic obligations. It would also assess whether particular functions are best delivered directly by the authority, through council-controlled organisations or through continuing shared arrangements. The related detailed-design priorities are set out in Appendix 6.

Trade-offs and risks

The key risk is that significant transition and integration costs will arise upfront, while efficiencies and other benefits may take longer than expected to be realised.

Other challenges include disruption from system and organisational change, the loss of local knowledge or relationships, standardisation that does not reflect legitimate local circumstances, uneven impacts from rating and debt harmonisation, differing asset condition and renewal needs, overestimating potential savings, and increased borrowing capacity creating pressure for higher investment or debt.

These reinforce the need for detailed financial analysis and a transparent benefits-realisation framework.

The financial and organisational assessment, including independently reviewed modelling, is provided in Appendix 4.

3.4 Maintaining local voice

The proposing councils have made "strong local voice" a foundation principle for the authority. This principle would maintain a clear line of sight between communities and decision-making and ensure fair and effective representation for different communities of interest.

Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel combines greater strategic scale with elected decision-making close to the communities affected. The proposed area is a network of provincial towns, rural communities and coastal settlements without a dominant metropolitan centre.

Directly elected statutory local boards would protect local influence, while the governing council would address matters requiring coordination across the wider area. The authority would retain local services and delivery centres within communities.

Representation across the authority

A mayor would be elected across Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel. The governing council would comprise 12 to 15 councillors.

Four to six directly elected statutory local boards would prepare local board plans and make specified decisions about local rates and priorities, facilities, place-making, grants and bylaws. Their responsibilities would be protected through legislation rather than delegated at the discretion of the governing council.

This structure recognises that the pressures facing Coromandel coastal settlements differ from those affecting the Hauraki Plains, Matamata-Piako and the upper Waihou communities.

Community, iwi and Māori participation

Community engagement within the time available showed support among respondents for an "eastern Waikato authority", alongside a consistent expectation that decisions would remain close to communities and that a larger centre would not dominate any area.

Existing Treaty settlement obligations, statutory relationships and relationships with iwi and hapū would transfer without diminution. Te Manawhenua Forum Mo Matamata-Piako and Te Toa Horopū ā Matamata-Piako have participated in conversations throughout this process and have requested that any head start proposal explicitly recognise and provide for Treaty settlement obligations, statutory acknowledgements, iwi management plans, co-governance arrangements, partnership commitments and other iwi-related obligations. They have also requested that any future local government structure carry forward, maintain and strengthen these arrangements.

The boundaries of the proposed authority and the catchment authority proposed by the Pare Hauraki settlement are in alignment. The new authority would provide enduring arrangements for iwi and Māori participation in governance and decision-making, with the final representation model developed alongside affected iwi and hapū.

Maintaining local voice requires accessible local services, adequately funded local boards and clear ways for communities to shape priorities between elections.

Trade-offs and risks

The principal challenge is achieving the right balance between integrated decision-making across the proposed authority and local responsiveness. Too little delegation could leave communities feeling disconnected from decisions. Too much fragmentation could recreate the governance complexity the proposal seeks to reduce.

Other risks include local boards having representation but insufficient authority or funding, boundaries not reflecting genuine communities of interest, inconsistent local service expectations and local governance arrangements becoming overly complex.

Representation options, local-board responsibilities, funding and participation arrangements are addressed in Appendix 2, with engagement findings in Appendix 1.

3.5 Deliverability

Foundation and pathway

The proposing councils have agreed principles covering local voice, affordability, iwi and hapū relationships, fair treatment of historic assets and liabilities, gradual rates harmonisation, clear accountability and organisational resilience. These principles will be used to test detailed design and transition decisions.

A high-level pathway would involve the following steps.

1. Cabinet agreement to proceed and confirmation of the statutory pathway
2. Government-enabled detailed design involving affected councils, iwi and hapū and other parties
3. Enabling legislation and establishment of a transition body
4. Election and commencement of the new authority's governance in 2028
5. Transfer of functions, people, assets, liabilities, systems and statutory responsibilities by 1 July 2030
6. Existing councils would continue exercising their statutory responsibilities until functions are legally transferred. A transition body with clear governance, accountability and independent assurance would oversee implementation and protect service and regulatory continuity.

Dependencies and support required

The councils and Government would need to coordinate establishment with planning reform and Local Water Done Well. Waikato Waters Limited would continue to provide those water services for its council shareholders – Matamata-Piako and Hauraki. Detailed design would confirm the new authority's ownership interests, funding relationships and accountability arrangements without disrupting the company's establishment plan or service delivery.

Government decisions would be required on the final boundary, establishment timetable, local board powers and transfer of regional functions. Government support would also be

required through enabling legislation, timely access to relevant information and agencies, and appropriate funding or transition assistance.

Detailed design would establish the opening balance sheet, transition funding and accountabilities, organisational and workforce requirements, rates and debt arrangements, systems integration and measures to protect service continuity.

The main risks are compressed timeframes, the scale and timing of simultaneous reforms, potential loss of specialist capability, incomplete financial and asset information, transition costs and uncertainty about which regional functions would transfer while the Resource Management model remains under development. Involving affected councils, iwi and hapū too late in decisions about boundaries, functions and transition arrangements would also weaken delivery.

The proposal provides a sufficient basis to proceed to detailed design.

Appendix 7 outlines the proposed establishment pathway, principal delivery risks and workstreams that would form the basis of a detailed implementation programme.

4. Treaty settlements and iwi relationships

> ""The Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel proposal best reflects these realities providing a governance footprint that aligns with the natural and cultural systems that have shaped our rohe for centuries and creates a strong foundation for future partnership between councils and mana whenua."

Treaty settlements, iwi rights and the Crown's commitments would remain in place. Existing statutory duties, appointments, agreements and relationships would continue without interruption and be given the same or equivalent effect under Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel. Detailed design would be undertaken with affected iwi, hapū and post-settlement governance entities, alongside the Crown's engagement process.

Affected arrangements

The proposed area overlaps with the rohe and areas of interest of Pare Hauraki, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Hauā, Raukawa and Ngāti Hinerangi. These interests extend across existing and proposed council boundaries, and the relevant settlement arrangements differ between iwi.

The Pare Hauraki Collective Redress Deed (yet to be enacted) provides for a Waihou, Piako and Coromandel Catchment Authority with iwi and local government appointments. The proposal would bring this catchment geography within one unitary authority, more closely aligning environmental governance with the communities and land connected by the catchments. The Catchment Authority's appointment structure and related provisions would need to reflect the final boundary and new local government arrangements.

Affected settlement legislation, deeds, statutory acknowledgements, appointments, notification duties and council relationships are presented in Appendix 5.

Initial conversations with iwi

Conversations have occurred throughout the process with the Waikato Iwi Chairs, direct contact with iwi leaders and proposal-specific meetings.

The Mayors and Chief Executives also met with mana whenua, chairs of post-settlement governance entities and the chairs of the Pare Hauraki and the Hauraki Māori Trust Board. Iwi have indicated general support for a Waihou, Piako Coromandel proposal based on a catchment model.

The Matamata-Piako District Council Te Mana Whenua Forum was brought in at the outset to provide an initial briefing. Settlement information prepared for the proposal has been shared with iwi representatives for review.

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust support a Waikato-wide model and has emphasised early, adequately resourced co-design and protection of existing statutory arrangements and relationships.

These discussions do not constitute formal agreement across all affected iwi and hapū.

Giving equivalent effect

During detailed design, the councils would work with each affected iwi, hapū and post-settlement governance entity, alongside the Crown, to identify affected settlement instruments and council responsibilities, preserve statutory acknowledgements, notification duties, appointments, agreements and established relationships; determine how the Catchment Authority and other settlement provisions would operate, address any proposed district boundary changes, and develop iwi and Māori participation arrangements without diminishing existing rights or relationships.

Early iwi-specific work would be required to maintain continuity in statutory responsibilities and ensure each existing arrangement has the same or equivalent effect under the new authority.

5. Wider Waikato effects

"It will be important to have local strong people who are able to represent our region with an outlook to future aspirations"

Benefits to the wider Waikato

For New Zealand, the Waikato is more than a collection of councils. It is a nationally significant region that supports the upper North Island's key growth and freight corridor. It includes international tourist destinations and nationally important river, lake and catchment systems, while serving as a major centre for food production, energy, aquaculture and water resources. The region's interdependencies extend beyond existing council boundaries, meaning decisions about Waikato local government have implications both within the region and across New Zealand.

However, the wider Waikato's scale, diversity and interdependence mean a single unitary authority may concentrate decision-making in a metropolitan centre distant from some of the communities it serves. More than one unitary authority would combine organisational scale with closer accountability to connected catchments and communities, while retaining Waikato-wide coordination where needed.

Reflecting community aspirations, councils across the Waikato are advancing parallel unitary authority proposals.

While each authority would assume full responsibility for unitary functions within its boundary, some issues would continue to require planning and management across the Waikato. A joint committee, or similar governance arrangement, will provide regional leadership on spatial planning, transport, infrastructure, emergency management and other cross-boundary priorities. The detailed design phase would identify these shared functions and determine how best to coordinate and deliver them.

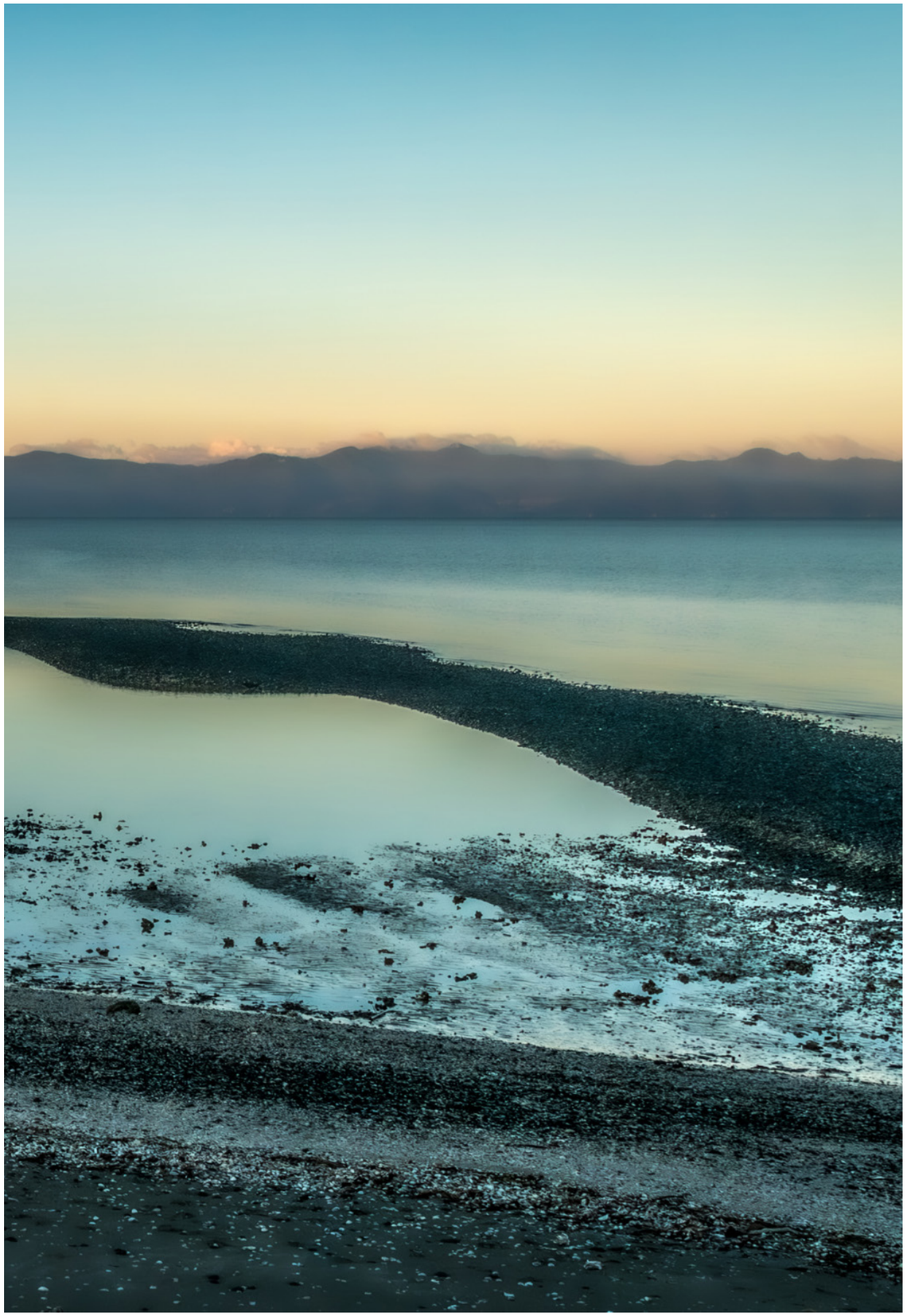
Effects outside the proposed boundary

The proposal does not determine future governance arrangements for councils outside the proposed authority. Detailed design would therefore need to protect service continuity, avoid unnecessary duplication of specialist capability and assess catchment and river-management funding.

Targeted rates currently generally follow the areas receiving the services. Detailed design would also need to test transferred general-rate contributions and residual regional costs. Specialist teams, systems, contracts and services may require continuing shared arrangements where separating them would reduce efficiency or service capability.

Detailed design would assess service continuity, capability, rates and the allocation of regional costs and revenues for communities inside and outside the boundary. It would also identify which functions could transfer effectively and which would continue to require shared governance or delivery. A coordinated regional design process would help maintain connections between regionally significant functions, secure adequate funding and clarify accountability.

Supporting analysis is provided in Appendices 2, 3 and 5.



6. Decision sought

"I support the Eastern Waikato unitary authority as the proposed neighbouring districts are similar to Matamata-Piako with rural and provincial communities with shared interests. I also support this option as it will retain our local voice of elected representation."

The councils ask Cabinet to agree in principle that Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel proceed through the Head Start process to government-enabled detailed design, with legal establishment at the 2028 local elections and full operational integration by 1 July 2030.

The councils seek Cabinet agreement to:

- **provide for officials to work with the proposing councils, affected councils, iwi and hapū, post-settlement governance entities and other affected parties**
- **confirm the final boundary, governance and representation model, Treaty-settlement arrangements, functions transferring, and financial and organisational design**
- **develop enabling legislation, establish leadership arrangements, including supporting the appointment of the Chief Executive, and government transition assistance and funding**
- **return the completed design to Cabinet for final policy and legislative decisions**
- **consideration of regulatory relief for the council Long Term Plan and representation reviews.**

The proposal provides a sufficient basis to proceed because it offers a credible opportunity to align accountability with connected catchments and communities, achieve practical organisational scale and retain meaningful local decision-making.

Appendix 7 sets out the phased establishment pathway.

Supporting evidence

This appendices brings together the evidence supporting the proposed Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary authority. It records the evidence available at outline-proposal stage and identifies the matters that must be resolved through government-enabled detailed design.

Appendices

1. **Mandate and engagement evidence**
   Resolutions, formal positions, engagement results and the limitation created by the revised boundary.

2. **Governance**
   Proposed two-tier governance model, agreed design principles, allocation of authority-wide and local responsibilities, matters for detailed design and safeguards for meaningful local-board powers.

3. **Boundary and communities-of-interest evidence**
   Proposed boundary maps, consistent demographic data and a focused assessment of the smaller cross-boundary catchments.

4. **Financial, organisational and economic evidence**
   Financial tables, properly sourced and updated for the final boundary, plus assumptions, exclusions and known uncertainties.

5. **Treaty settlements and iwi relationships**
   Affected arrangements and parties, engagement undertaken and matters requiring equivalent effect or legislative amendment.

6. **Wider-Waikato effects and continuing arrangements**
   Waikato Regional Council, South Waikato, shared services, spatial planning, transport, catchment management, funding and residual capability.

7. **Deliverability, principal risks and detailed-design priorities**
   Indicative roadmap, key delivery dependencies and a consolidated schedule of matters for detailed design.

1. Mandate and engagement evidence

Council mandate and formal positions

Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Councils have jointly developed the proposal. Their work has included a collaborative working group, Chief Executive workshops, Treaty settlement mapping, community engagement and elected-member workshops on 7 and 20 July 2026.

The three councils have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding setting out the principles that would guide detailed design. These include protecting local voice, affordability, iwi and hapū relationships, fair treatment of historic assets and liabilities, gradual rates harmonisation, clear accountability and long-term organisational resilience.

Party	Position and evidence required
Thames-Coromandel District Council	RESOLUTION: That the Thames-Coromandel District Council: 1. Receives the 'Simplifying Local Government – Headstart Proposal' report RESOLUTION: That the Thames-Coromandel District Council: 2. Agree to submit a Headstart proposal to central government before 9 August, in accordance with the reform timelines. RESOLUTION: 3. Agree the preferred option for a Headstart Proposal is through partnership with Hauraki District Council and Matamata-Piako District Council. 4. Adopt the Memorandum of Understanding with Thames Coromandel District Council, Hauraki District Council and Matamata-Piako District Council. RESOLUTION: That the Thames-Coromandel District Council: 5. Supports the Waihou-Piako-Coromandel Headstart Proposal (as tabled), authorising the Chief Executive to make minor administrative and non-material amendments to the proposal, consistent with Council's resolution. 6. Authorises the Mayor to sign off the proposal and the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Council. 7. Instructs staff to submit the relevant proposal by 9 August 2026. 8. Notes the next steps as identified in Section 9 of the report.

Party	Position and evidence required
Hauraki District Council	Proposing council. Council considered two local government structure models: supporting the Government's Head Start proposal and entering the backstop process or pursuing the proposed Waihou-Piako-Coromandel Unitary Authority with Thames-Coromandel and Matamata-Piako District Councils. Members reviewed a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the proposed partnership and, following discussion, unanimously endorsed the Waihou-Piako-Coromandel model as their preferred option. Councillors also requested that the name of the proposed unitary authority be reconsidered to include "Hauraki." RESOLVED THAT Council approves Option 2: support the Waihou-Piako-Coromandel Unitary Authority, and THAT Council adopt the Memorandum of Understanding, as amended, and THAT Council authorises the Chief Executive to make minor administrative and non-material amendments to the proposal and Memorandum of Understanding, consistent with Council's resolution, and THAT Council authorises the Mayor to sign off the proposal and the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Council, and THAT Council instructs staff to submit the relevant proposal by 9 August 2026, THAT Council consider placeholder name to include 'Hauraki', and THAT Council thank all staff involved in the process. C26/212 CARRIED

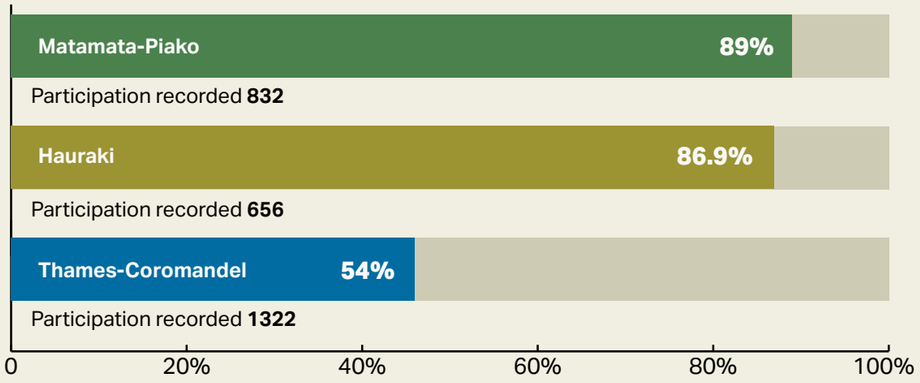
Party	Position and evidence required
Matamata-Piako District Council	Proposing council. Resolution number CO/2026/00003 C) Approves Option 2: the Waihou-Piako-Coromandel Unitary Authority Proposal, noting this has been previously referred to as East Waikato both throughout this report and in community consultation. D) Authorises the Mayor / Chief Executive to: - Amend the proposal to reflect decisions made by the other Councils and any administrative and non-material amendments to the relevant proposal, consistent with Council's resolution. - Sign off the proposal on behalf of Council - Submit the proposal by 9 August 2026
Three proposing councils	Memorandum of Understanding included at the end of the document.
South Waikato District Council	Participated in the initial development of this proposal and subsequently withdrew.
Waikato Regional Council	Would be directly affected by the transfer of regional functions, staff, assets, liabilities, funding and statutory responsibilities within the new boundary.
Affected iwi	See letter from Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust at the end of the document.

Community engagement

Engagement undertaken by the three proposing councils tested an East Waikato authority comprising Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki, Matamata-Piako and South Waikato District.

Among those who participated, East Waikato was the most frequently selected geographic option in each of the three proposing districts.

Respondents selecting East Waikato



In Thames-Coromandel, 34 per cent selected a North Bay of Plenty option and 12 per cent selected a Greater Waikato option.

Across the three districts, participants consistently prioritised:

- decision-making that remains close to communities
- a fair voice for provincial towns, rural areas and coastal settlements
- avoiding domination by a large metropolitan centre
- keeping costs down and treating inherited debt and locally funded assets fairly
- improved flood, river and environmental management
- continued engagement as governance arrangements are developed.

These results support further consideration of an eastern Waikato authority and have influenced the proposal's emphasis on statutory local boards, financial fairness and catchment-based planning.

These results have shaped the proposal's emphasis on statutory local boards, financial fairness and catchment-based planning. However, the engagement tested the broader East Waikato option rather than the revised Waihou–Piako–Hauraki-Coromandel boundary.

Engagement was opt-in, so the results do not statistically represent the wider population. Before confirming the boundary, the councils may need further conversations with affected communities, landowners, iwi and hapū, and neighbouring councils.

Sources: the three council engagement reports and supporting datasets.

2. Governance

Currently there are 38 elected members of the three council territorial authorities, including four Māori ward members. In addition, there are five community boards with a total of 20 representatives. In addition, the Waikato Regional Council has 14 elected members, including two Māori seats.

The proposed governance model will reduce this number.

Our governance model

A two-tier unitary authority

Our two-tier governance model gives local communities a strong voice while ensuring effective leadership and decision making across the region.

Tier 1 - Council (Unitary Authority)

COUNCIL
Elected by the people

12-15 COUNCILLORS
Elected

1 MAYOR
Elected at large

The council provides governance and oversight at the unitary authority and Waikato regional levels

EXAMPLES OF KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Spatial planning
- Biosecurity and pest control
- Land transport
- Civil defence
- Land drainage and flood protection
- Maritime matters
- Catchment management
- Regulatory services

ONE COUNCIL working for Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel communities

Tier 2 - Local Boards

LOCAL BOARDS
Elected by the people

4-6 LOCAL BOARDS
Based on communities of interest

Local boards are based on communities of interest and have meaningful decision making powers set by legislation

EXAMPLES OF KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage local community facilities and places
- Govern local grants
- Set local rates
- Adopt local board plans that reflect local priorities and preferences
- Develop bylaws

STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP Decisions that reflect local needs, priorities and aspirations

Both tiers are elected by the people, ensuring accountability at every level and a balance of strong regional leadership with local decision making

Mayors and several elected members from each council met to discuss potential governance structures and agreed on the following:

- local voice matters: local people should be empowered to make decisions and take action
- we want to be strategic and influential nationally while remaining connected locally
- ensure leadership is directly accountable to the people
- reflect non-resident ratepayers in representation across the unitary authority
- recognise obligations to hapū and iwi
- adopt a model people can trust to deliver better outcomes for communities
- remain open to working with the wider Waikato on shared priorities.

What we want in a governance structure:

- a two-tier unitary authority, with both tiers elected by the people: one council covering the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel area and four to six local boards
- a council of 12 to 15 elected members, plus one mayor elected at large
- the council would provide governance and oversight at the unitary authority and Waikato regional level for matters such as spatial planning, land transport and land drainage and flood protection, catchment management, biosecurity and pest control, civil defence, regulatory services, and maritime matters
- local boards would be based on communities of interest and have meaningful decision-making powers set in legislation. They would manage local community facilities and places, govern local rates, and adopt local board plans that reflect local priorities and preferences.

Matters to be confirmed in stage 2 of the Head Start process:

- the name of the Council
- local board boundaries, names and number of elected representatives in each
- how the interests of non-resident ratepayers should be reflected in representation arrangements
- iwi and Māori representation
- governance arrangements for Waikato-wide functions

How this high-level governance model simplifies local government while maintaining local voice:

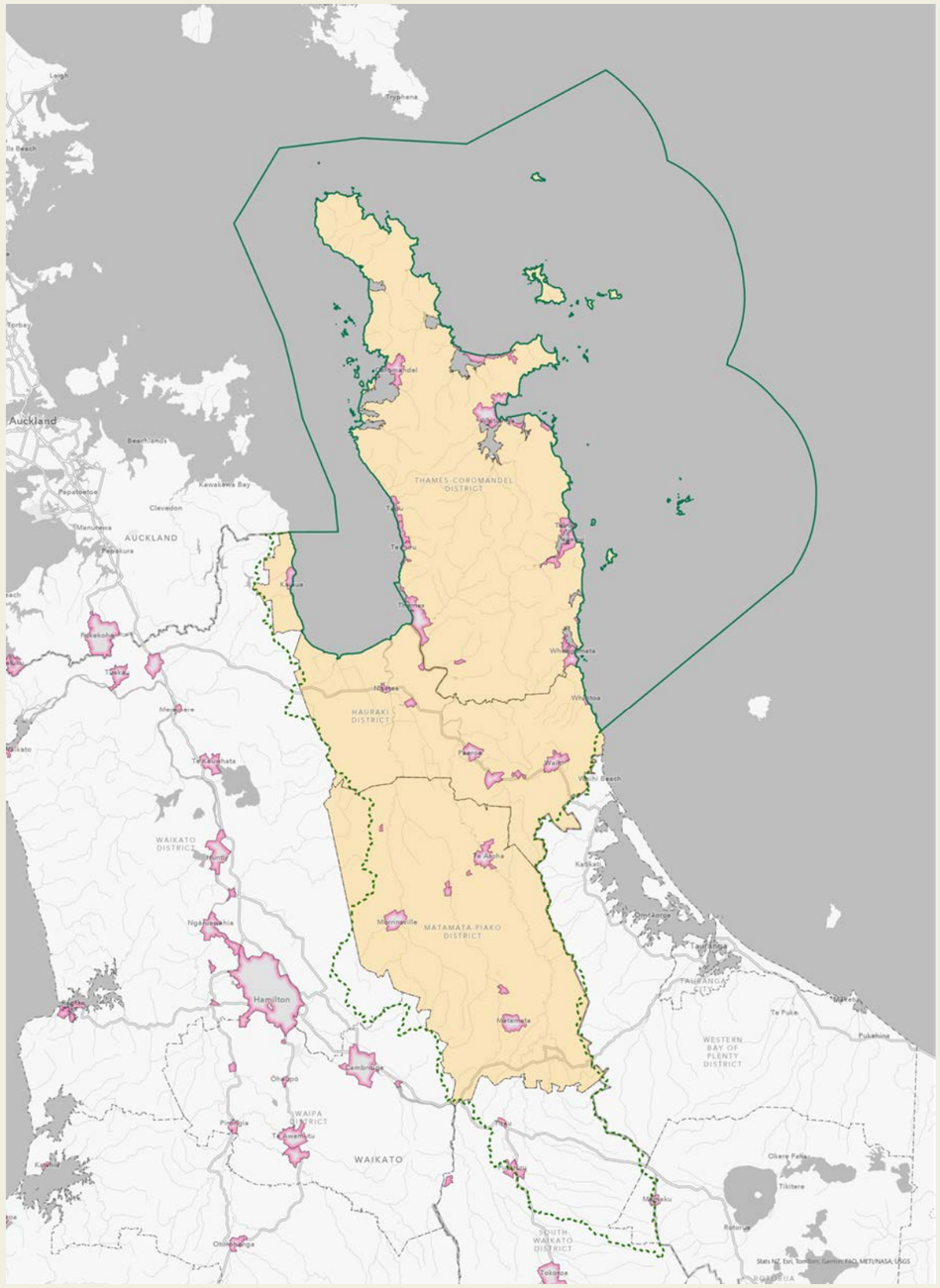
- a single council would represent the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel area, replacing the current regional council and three territorial authorities
- local boards provide locally elected representatives who are accessible to residents and accountable to their communities
- decision-making remains close to communities, helping local needs and priorities shape service delivery and investment decisions
- more granular representation has a better chance of reflecting diverse communities of interest.

Risks:

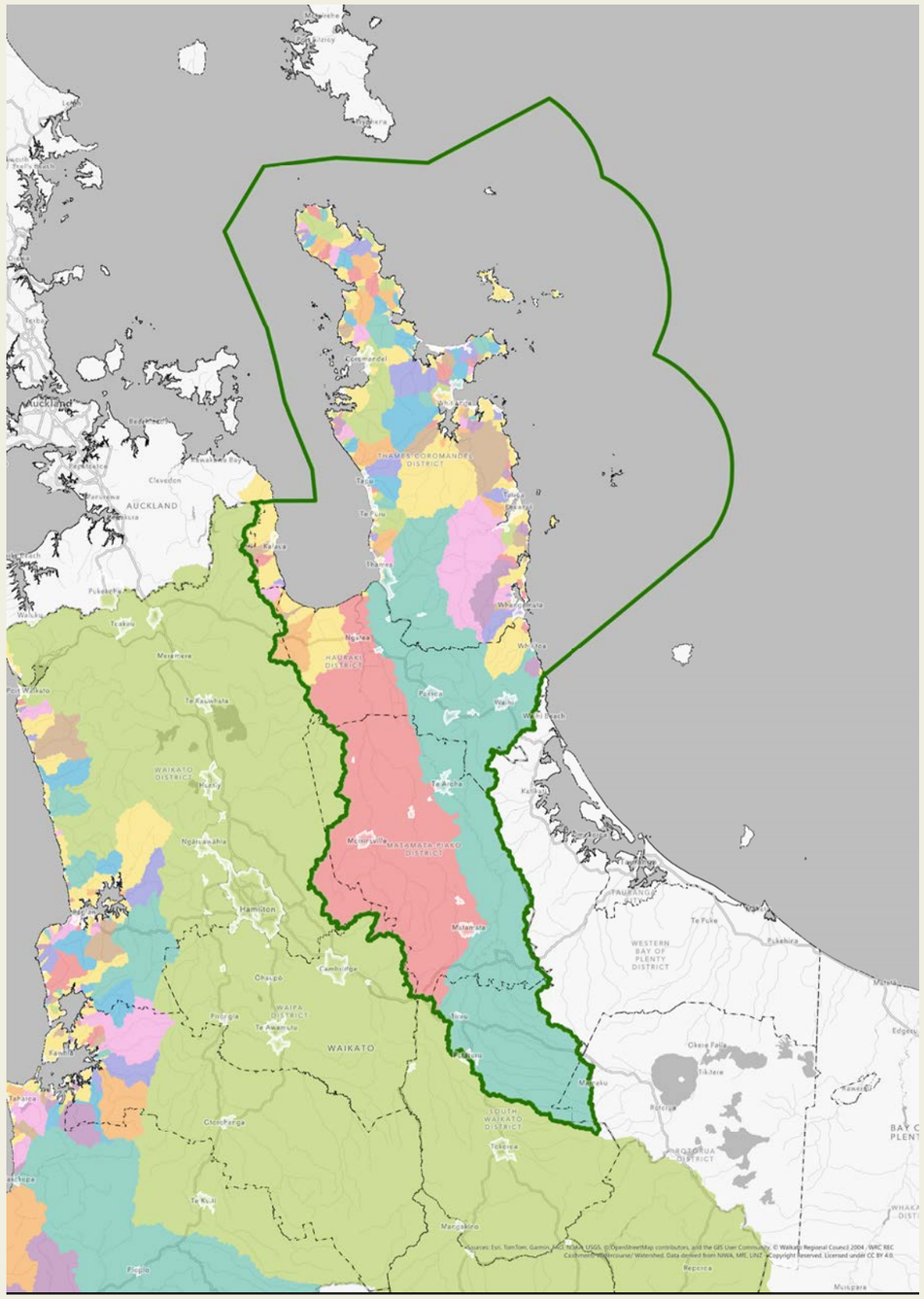
The principal risk is that local boards could have formal representation without sufficient authority, funding or organisational support to influence local decisions. Experience of the Auckland model suggests that devolution has not always worked as intended and that local boards can struggle to represent community priorities within a centralised structure. To manage this risk, legislation should clearly define local board responsibilities, decision-making powers and funding authority, rather than leaving these matters primarily to the discretion of the governing council.

3. Boundary and communities-of-interest evidence

The proposed authority would comprise the complete Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako districts and, subject to detailed assessment and engagement, it may include some boundary adjustments based on catchments.



Map 1 - Shows the existing district boundaries (yellow) against a possible catchment based Unitary boundary (dashed green line) should a catchment based unitary be confirmed



Map 2 - River catchment boundaries (multi colours) shown alongside existing district boundaries (dotted line) against a possible catchment based boundary (Green line). The Waihou River (green) and Piako River (red) are the 2 primary catchments through Matamata-Piako and Hauraki District councils.

Evidence for the three-district area

The proposed area comprises a network of provincial towns, rural communities and coastal settlements without a dominant metropolitan centre. The communities retain distinct identities, while environmental systems, infrastructure, industries, transport routes, labour markets and Treaty relationships connect them.

The Waihou and Piako catchments extend through rural production areas and the Hauraki Plains before reaching the Firth of Thames and Tīkapa Moana / Hauraki Gulf. The Coromandel Peninsula's western catchments also flow to the Firth, while its eastern catchments flow to the wider Gulf. Flooding, land drainage, freshwater quality, biodiversity, biosecurity, sediment, coastal pressures and natural hazards interact across this catchment-to-coast system.

Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari provides an existing marine spatial planning framework for the Hauraki Gulf. It reinforces the connection between decisions affecting land, freshwater and the coastal marine area. The proposed authority would still need to work with Auckland Council, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, iwi and hapū and other organisations with responsibilities extending beyond its boundary.

Economic and infrastructure connections also cross the three districts. Agriculture, dairy processing, forestry, aquaculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism rely on common transport corridors, labour, processing facilities, supply chains and access to markets and ports. Approximately 2,360 kilometres of local roads connect farms, forests, towns and visitor destinations with State Highways 2, 25, 26, 27 and 29.

These connections demonstrate that the three complete districts form a connected subregion. Coastal, visitor and non-resident-ratepayer interests strongly influence the Coromandel Peninsula. Agriculture, flood protection and land drainage shape the Hauraki Plains, while the towns of Matamata-Piako support rural production, processing, manufacturing and tourism. The governance model must continue to reflect these differences.

Demographic baseline

The available combined data provide the following baseline for the three complete districts.

Measure	Three-district baseline
Population at 30 June 2025	93,500
Rating units at 30 June 2025	57,280
Land area	5,232 km²

Upper Waihou Catchment

South Waikato District spans both the Waihou and Waikato catchments. Inclusion of the defined upper Waihou area would bring more of the catchment's headwaters, rural land, settlements and infrastructure within the authority responsible for the Waihou system further north.

This establishes a credible catchment rationale for assessing a boundary change.

In addition to catchment alignment, the following should also be considered:

- the exact land, properties, population and rating units proposed to transfer
- community identity and the views of affected communities
- travel, employment, education, retail and service relationships
- infrastructure networks, facilities, contracts and planned investment
- assets, liabilities, debt, reserves and historic obligations
- iwi and hapū interests and relevant Treaty settlement arrangements
- representation and access to local services within the proposed authority
- the financial, organisational and service effects on affected districts
- alternatives to transfer, including retention of the existing boundary with strengthened cross-boundary arrangements.

This work and conversations with stakeholders are part of the detailed design.

Smaller cross-boundary catchments

The Waitakaruru, Waiwarawara and Miranda Stream catchments and an unnamed Miranda tributary catchment include land within Waikato District before passing through Hauraki District to the Firth of Thames. Council records document river and flood-management challenges created by the current division of responsibilities. The existing district boundaries cut across the Piako and Waikato River catchments. Any future council boundary should follow the catchment boundaries where practicable.

Any boundary adjustment should follow a catchment-specific assessment of:

- the catchment boundary and affected properties
- the historical basis for the existing council boundary
- iwi and hapū interests and relevant statutory arrangements
- current flood, drainage, environmental and operational responsibilities
- assets, funding, investment and recorded coordination problems
- the effects on councils, communities, landowners and ratepayers.

The appropriate outcome may differ between catchments. If a boundary is retained, enduring arrangements would still be needed for planning, information, monitoring, flood management, investment, funding and incident response.

4. Financial, organisational and economic evidence

The preliminary analysis demonstrates the scale of an authority formed from the three districts. It does not constitute an opening balance sheet or establish a quantified net saving.

Preliminary financial scale

The following figures were compiled from 2026/27 Annual Plan information and exclude water-services activity.

Scale indicator	Preliminary total
Population at 30 June 2025	**93,500**
Rating units at 30 June 2025	**57,280**
Land area	**5,232 km²**
Contribution to national GDP, 2025	**1.5%**
Estimated total revenue, 2026/27	**$320,691,000***
Estimated operating expenditure, 2026/27	**$315,779,000***
Estimated net assets at 30 June 2027	**$3,702,956,000#**
Estimated property, plant and equipment at 30 June 2027	**$3,538,279,000#**
Estimated net debt at 30 June 2027	**$108,859,000**
Estimated capital programme, 2026/27–2033/34	**$774,475,000**

* Revenue and operating expenditure include estimates for Waikato Regional Council catchment management, flood control and river management directly attributable to the area. They also include a 37 per cent share of the balance of relevant regional revenue and costs, allocated according to rating units.

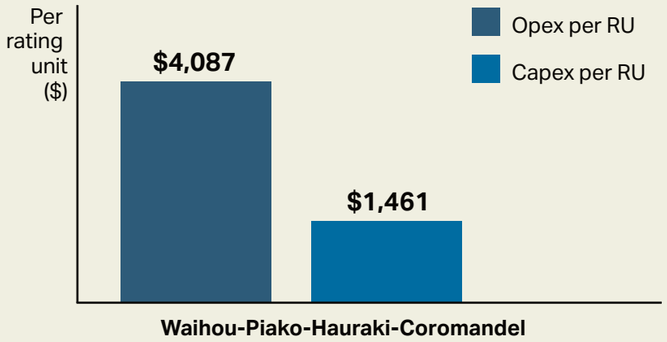
The figures do not include Waikato Regional Council assets.

Source: combined council financial dataset using 2026/27 Annual Plan information and the stated Waikato Regional Council allocation assumptions.

The figures are based principally on the three complete districts. If any boundary changes occurs as a result of detailed design the financial impact will need to be reassessed. The available information for regional operating activity, assets and capital investment means the table cannot be used as the authority's opening financial position.

Average Spend per Rating unit (FY28-FY34)

As a baseline the average spend per rating unit is captured below for all three councils (includes average rating from Waikato Regional Council – applied at a rating unit level) :



Source: Independent financial review of headstart (MartinJenkins) July 2026

Borrowing indicators

Preliminary modelling produced the following indicative position.

Net debt as a proportion of adjusted revenue (July 2027)	**34%**
Net-debt limit based on a 280% covenant (July 2027)	**$892,902,000**
Current net debt (July 2027)	**$108,859,000**
Indicative additional borrowing capacity (July 2027)	**$784,043,000**
Additional capacity relative to current net debt (July 2027)	**7.2 times**
Borrowing costs as a proportion of adjusted revenue (July 2027)	**2.3%**

Source: combined 2026/27 council financial modelling, excluding water services and applying the revenue adjustments used for covenant calculations.

The calculation indicates potential balance-sheet headroom. It does not demonstrate that additional borrowing would be affordable or desirable. The result is sensitive to the final boundary, the definition of adjusted revenue, transferred regional activity, asset condition, renewal requirements, capital priorities, interest rates and lender covenants.

Organisational scale and potential efficiencies

The three councils currently operate separate governance, executive, finance, people, information-technology, legal, communication, planning, reporting and asset-management arrangements. Potential efficiencies arise from consolidating these functions and systems, coordinating procurement and renewing contracts through a common programme.

The strongest operational opportunities identified are:

- managing approximately 2,360 kilometres of local roads as one network
- building on Hauraki District Council's operational and technical capability in land drainage and flood protection
- bringing together regional flood-protection responsibilities for the Waihou and Piako systems, Thames, the Kauaeranga River and the Thames coastal margin
- planning stopbanks, pump stations, floodgates, drains, rivers, land use and environmental management through one organisation
- using common asset-management systems, investment standards and prioritisation
- supporting specialist planning, engineering, environmental, regulatory and programme-delivery capability across a larger workforce.

Modelling carried out identified that the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel option presented results in a net financial benefit per rating unit.

Integrated basis	Indicative NPV FY28-34	Indicative NPV FY28-40	Forecast break-even year
Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel	~($450)	~$700	FY37

Source: Independent financial review of headstart (MartinJenkins) July 2026

Rates and resilience

The preliminary analysis records:

- rates per person ranging from $1,085 - $2,236 in 2026/27
- average household rates ranging from $1,868 - $2,307 in 2024/25
- average household rates equivalent to 1.8 - 3.3 per cent of 2024/25 median household income, which is a common affordability metric
- population growth over the preceding five years ranging from zero - 8 per cent
- forecast growth to 2034 ranging from a 7.2 per cent decline to 9.7 per cent growth.

The variation strengthens the case for a staged approach to rates harmonisation and transparent treatment of debt, reserves, service levels and historic obligations. It also means the distributional effects of integration need to be tested for different communities and ratepayer groups.

Analysis was completed to understand what the impact would be to the unitary authority if there was a shock as a result of a natural hazard. Two scenarios were applied, a $50m shock and a $150m shock.

Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel has a low debt-to-revenue ratio, at 129% before the shock and 185% following a $150 million shock (leaving $260m headroom).

	FY32 Position		Shock as % of revenue		Net debt to revenue post-shock		Remaining headroom	
	Net debt-to-revenue limit (LGFA)	Net debt-to-revenue Pre-shock	$50m shock	$150m shock	$50m shock	$150m shock	$50m shock	$150m shock
Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel	280%	129%	18%	55%	148%	185%	$360m	$260m

Source: Independent financial review of headstart (MartinJenkins) July 2026

Financial Position: Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel

As part of the independent financial review, key financial observations, assumptions and positions were captured, along with net debt positions and capital expenditure. See below for details.

Observations

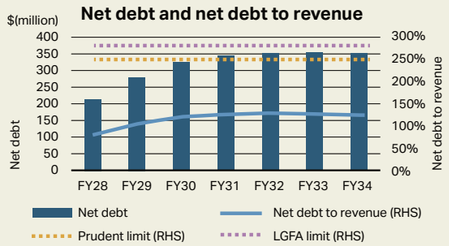
- Capex programme of ~$0.6bn, tapering off in later years. Spend is ~$110m from FY28-FY30, and drops to $57m by the end of the LTP period.
- Almost entirely renewals, with minimal growth-related capital; consistent with modest 3.7% growth.

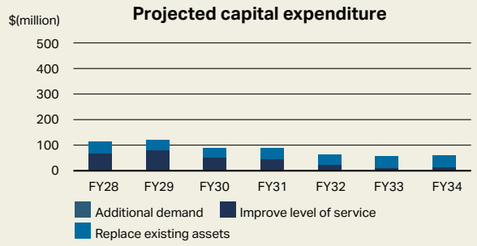
Key assumptions

Dimension	Amount
Opex efficiencies (% of amenable opex, from FY30)	4 – 6%
Capex efficiencies (from FY30)	0.0 – 0.5%
Integration costs (% of amenable opex)	30%
WRC cost allocation	Rating Units

Core financial position

Dimension	Amount
Opex, excel. dep'n & interest (FY28)	$224m
Starting net debt (FY28)	$216m
Projected net debt (FY34)	$348m
Projected net debt to revenue (FY34)	124%
Capex profile (FY28-FY34)	$0.6bn





Source: Independent financial review of headstart (MartinJenkins) July 2026

Economic evidence

The three-district economy contributed approximately $6.3 billion, or 1.5 per cent, to national GDP in 2025. Its economic base includes agriculture, dairy processing, forestry, aquaculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism.

Infometrics analysis records a Herfindahl–Hirschman Index score of 313 in 2025, compared with 489 across 66 territorial authorities. On this measure, the lower score indicates a more diversified spread of economic activity and less dependence on a small number of industries.

Source: Infometrics economic analysis

5. Treaty settlements and iwi relationships

The proposed area overlaps with the rohe and areas of interest of Pare Hauraki, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Hauā, Raukawa and Ngāti Hinerangi. These are distinct interests and relationships. They should not be treated as one iwi position or one partnership.

Iwi identified and settlement position

Pare Hauraki comprises 12 iwi, each with its own interests, governance arrangements and settlement position. Other iwi also hold interests within or connected to the proposed area.

Collective or relationship	Iwi	Individual settlement position
Pare Hauraki	Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki	Settlement completed through the Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Claims Settlement Act 2018.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Hako	The signing of a Deed of Settlement is pending. An Agreement in Principle Equivalent was signed in 2011.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Hei	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Hei Claims Settlement Act 2026.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Maru	Deed of Settlement signed in 2017. Implementing legislation remains to be confirmed.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Pāoa	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Pāoa Claims Settlement Act 2025.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Porou ki Hauraki	Settlement in progress. No Deed of Settlement has been signed.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Pūkenga	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Pūkenga Claims Settlement Act 2017.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Rāhiri Tumutumu	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Rāhiri Tumutumu Claims Settlement Act 2026.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Tamaterā	Deed of Settlement signed in 2017. Implementing legislation remains to be confirmed.
Pare Hauraki	Ngāti Tara Tokanui	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Tara Tokanui Claims Settlement Act 2026.
Pare Hauraki	Ngaati Whanaunga	Deed of Settlement initialled in 2017 and ratification pending.
Pare Hauraki	Te Patukirikiri	Deed of Settlement signed in 2028. Implementing legislation remains to be confirmed.
Waikato relationships	Waikato-Tainui	Land and river settlements are in place, including the Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995 and Waikato River settlement legislation.
Waikato relationships	Ngāti Hauā	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014.
Upper-catchment and Waikato River relationships	Raukawa	Settlement and Waikato River arrangements are in place, including the Raukawa Claims Settlement Act 2014.
Matamata-Piako relationships	Ngāti Hinerangi	Settlement completed through the Ngāti Hinerangi Claims Settlement Act 2021.

The table records the individual settlement positions currently identified. It does not imply a shared position within Pare Hauraki or among the other iwi listed.

Arrangement or party	Relevance to the proposal
Pare Hauraki Collective Redress Deed	Recognises the Waihou, Piako and Coromandel catchments as a connected geography and provides for a future catchment authority. Pare Hauraki iwi are at different stages in their individual settlement processes.
Waihou, Piako and Coromandel Catchment Authority	Proposed 14-member body comprising six Pare Hauraki appointees, one appointment involving Raukawa, Ngāti Hauā and Ngāti Hinerangi, and seven local-government appointees. Local-government representation would need to be reconfigured following reorganisation.
Waikato-Tainui	Interests include Waikato River relationships, Te Ture Whaimana and relevant settlement legislation.
Raukawa	Interests extend across the proposed area and upper catchments.
Ngāti Hauā	Interests extend across the proposed area with a specific co-governance arrangement in place for the Waharoa (Matamata) Aerodrome.
Ngāti Hinerangi	Settlement interests are concentrated in and around Matamata-Piako.
Individual council arrangements	Include statutory acknowledgements, notification duties, appointments, relationship agreements and other council-specific responsibilities.

The Crown remains responsible for its Treaty settlement commitments. Reorganisation would not alter Treaty settlements or iwi rights. It would, however, change the local authorities responsible for giving effect to some statutory duties, appointments, agreements and relationships.

Legal succession may carry some responsibilities to the new authority. It should not be assumed that succession alone will provide the same practical or legal effect in every case. The Catchment Authority's local-government appointments may require reconfiguration, while other arrangements may require legislative amendment, Crown action, agreement with affected entities or administrative transfer.

Detailed design needs to produce a settlement-by-settlement obligations register identifying:

- each affected deed, Act, statutory acknowledgement, agreement or other instrument
- the iwi, hapū or post settlement governance entity concerned
- the responsibility currently held by each council
- the future responsible authority
- how to give each existing arrangement the same or equivalent effect
- any legislative amendment, Crown decision or agreement required
- catchment interest alignment
- the engagement completed and further work agreed.

This work needs to be undertaken with each affected iwi, hapū and post settlement governance entity to maintain continuity in statutory responsibilities or established relationships.

6. Wider-Waikato effects and continuing arrangements

Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel would remain part of an interconnected Waikato. Establishment would change where territorial and regional responsibilities sit, but regional planning, transport, catchments, infrastructure, emergency management and shared services would continue to cross authority boundaries.

Effects on adjacent Councils

Any boundary catchment adjustments would have the following impacts on the affected councils:

- population and rating base
- land, roads, facilities and other assets
- liabilities, debt, reserves and capital commitments
- staff, contracts, systems and service delivery
- representation and community relationships
- remaining organisational scale, capability and unit costs
- interests in shared organisations and regional arrangements.

These effects have not yet been quantified. Detailed design needs to assess the consequences for both the communities and the Councils. It must also compare transfer with retention of the existing territorial boundary supported by coordinated catchment, environmental and service arrangements.

Effects on Waikato Regional Council functions

The regional functions proposed to transfer remain to be confirmed and may be affected by final national resource-management settings. Detailed design needs to determine:

- which functions transfer, remain shared or require transitional support
- the associated staff, specialist capability, data, systems and contracts
- the assets, liabilities, reserves and capital commitments attached to those functions
- the treatment of statutory responsibilities and existing plans.

Catchment and river-management schemes receive targeted-rate and general-rate funding. Targeted revenue would generally follow the communities and areas receiving the service. The allocation of general-rate revenue, regional investment and residual costs requires further analysis and agreement.

Continuing arrangements

Relationship	Proposed treatment and work required
Regional spatial planning	Continue Waikato-wide participation. Confirm joint governance, representation, evidence, funding and delivery arrangements under the final planning system.
Transport	Manage local roads within the new authority while coordinating strategic connections and regional public transport with other authorities and the New Zealand Transport Agency.
Catchment and environmental management	Establish arrangements for catchments and environmental systems extending beyond the boundary, including information, monitoring, investment and incident response.
Hauraki Gulf and Sea Change	Continue participation in Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari and relationships with Auckland Council and the Hauraki Gulf Forum. Confirm the new authority's representation and implementation responsibilities.
Emergency management	Confirm future group membership, governance, funding, operational coordination and service continuity.
Waikato Waters Limited	Hauraki and Matamata-Piako are shareholders; Thames-Coromandel is not a shareholder at establishment. Confirm future ownership, funding and accountability without disrupting water-services delivery.
Co-Lab	Confirm membership, shareholding and continuation of shared services.
Local Government Funding Agency	Confirm succession, guarantees, covenants and financing arrangements.
Waikato Regional Airport Limited	Confirm the future treatment of Matamata-Piako District Council's interest.
Hauraki Rail Trail Charitable Trust	The three proposing councils are settlors to the Trust, which governs, manages, develops and promotes the Hauraki Rail Trail. Confirm succession to the councils' rights and obligations; future trustee appointment arrangements; continued iwi appointment rights; treatment of trail assets, funding and maintenance responsibilities; and any amendments required to the Trust deed or related agreements.
Services that cannot be separated efficiently	Identify any specialist teams, systems, contracts or functions requiring continued shared delivery or transitional support.

The available information demonstrates an established foundation for collaboration. It does not establish that the proposal would have no adverse effect on other councils or communities. Residual costs, loss of scale and specialist capability must be assessed directly.

7. Deliverability, principal risks and detailed-design priorities

The proposal has a credible basis for proceeding to detailed design, with three proposing councils, an agreed direction and principles, a proposed geography, an outline governance model and preliminary evidence of financial and organisational scale.

Delivery depends on timely government decisions, enabling legislation, transition support and early involvement of affected councils, iwi and hapū, staff and communities.

Establishment roadmap

Period	Proposed milestone	Principal requirement
August 2026	Outline proposal submitted	Council resolutions, Memorandum of Understanding and supporting evidence completed
September 2026	Cabinet decision in principle	Confirmation that the proposal may proceed to detailed design
October 2026–March 2027	Government-enabled detailed design	Final boundary, functions, governance, Treaty settlement arrangements, financial design and transition requirements agreed
May 2027	Cabinet consideration of final design	Policy decisions and authority to prepare legislation
Early 2028	Enabling legislation	Establishment framework, transition powers, governance and statutory succession provided
April 2028	Chief Executive appointed	Chief Executive and establishment accountabilities confirmed
October 2028	New council elected and legally established	Day Zero; governance commences, reporting lines of existing council CEs change and the transition plan is approved by December
October 2028–June 2030	Organisational transition	Functions, people, assets, liabilities, systems and statutory responsibilities transferred in stages
1 July 2030	Integrated authority commences	Day One; one operating authority, followed by a stabilisation period

Existing councils would continue to exercise their statutory responsibilities until those responsibilities are legally transferred. The final pathway should include clear governance, decision gates, independent assurance and contingency arrangements if legislation or individual workstreams are delayed.

Matters for detailed design

Assessment area	Matters for detailed design
Supporting the new planning system	Regional spatial and regulatory planning governance; statutory plan sequencing and transitional provisions; transfer of planning, consenting, monitoring and enforcement functions; interim delegations; integration of plans, evidence, data, systems and ePlans; retention of specialist capability and institutional knowledge; mechanisms for regional, iwi and local input; alignment with the final national planning framework.
Simplifying local governance	Governing-body and committee structure; allocation of regional and local responsibilities; statutory local-board and community-board roles; delegations and accountability; joint governance and resourcing of regional functions; Māori representation and partnership arrangements; financial delegations; council-controlled organisations; mechanisms for reviewing the governance model.
Achieving economies of scale	Transition costs and benefits; benefits-realisation and assurance framework; rating harmonisation and transitional protections; debt and treasury arrangements; opening balance sheet; asset condition and renewal requirements; infrastructure priorities; workforce and specialist capability; systems integration; procurement; council-controlled organisations and shared services; local service-level variations.
Maintaining local voice	Governing-body, ward and constituency arrangements; Māori representation; local-board and community-board boundaries; delegated responsibilities; local funding and budget authority; relationship between authority-wide and local decisions; access to representatives, services and staff; representation of rural, urban, coastal and other communities of interest; relationships with iwi, hapū and community organisations; processes for reviewing representation and delegations.
Deliverability and service continuity	Legislative pathway; establishment and transition governance; government funding and support; transfer of people, functions, assets, liabilities and statutory responsibilities; operating model; systems integration; workforce retention; service-continuity protections; critical dependencies and decision gates; assurance, reporting and contingency arrangements.
Boundary and communities of interest	Legal boundary mapping and affected-property schedules; verified population, rating-unit and land-area data; settlement and rural-community connections; local identity and community views; commuting, employment, education, retail and service-use patterns; transport and infrastructure relationships; engagement with affected communities, landowners, iwi and hapū; effects on communities inside and outside the boundary; comparison with retaining existing boundaries and strengthening cross-boundary arrangements.
Treaty settlements and iwi relationships	Settlement-by-settlement obligations assessment; legislative amendments; future responsible authorities; Catchment Authority composition; statutory acknowledgements and notification duties; representation and appointment processes; iwi-specific engagement; how to give existing obligations the same or equivalent effect; Crown responsibilities and decisions.
Wider-Waikato and cross-boundary relationships	Continuing regional and cross-boundary arrangements; effects on affected councils and remaining communities; shared governance, funding and information arrangements; treatment of functions that cannot be efficiently separated; interests in shared services and council-controlled organisations; ongoing catchment, infrastructure, transport and emergency-management relationships.

The matters identified above would form the basis of a government-enabled detailed-design programme. The evidence supports proceeding to that next phase. Final establishment decisions would follow confirmation of the boundary and regional functions, assessment of the effects on other councils and communities, and agreement on how affected rights, responsibilities, costs and capabilities would be carried forward.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

SIMPLIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PARTIES

The Mayor of Hauraki District Council

AND

The Mayor of Matamata-Piako District Council

AND

The Mayor of Thames-Coromandel District Council

Each referred to as "a Party". Collectively, all three (3) together referred to as "the Parties"

BACKGROUND

A. The Parties and their respective Councils are working together to develop a qualifying Simplifying Local Government (SLG) proposal (the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal) for submission by 9 August 2026, subject to statutory decision-making obligations and processes.

B. The Parties and their respective Councils have also been in discussions about other SLG proposals and each Party acknowledges that at the date of signing no decision about what, if any, proposal will be made to Government.

C. The Parties have, however, recognised that there appears to be some support for the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal and have been discussing that, if the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal is submitted, how they would like their respective Councils to progress any further development of that proposal.

D. This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) records the Guiding Principles the Parties have developed together and establishes how the Parties envisage these principles will inform the detailed design of the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal.

E. The MoU will be signed as a non-binding arrangement, with the intention that if the respective Councils support the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal they will each also adopt the MoU by resolution as a binding agreement.

AGREEMENT

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The Parties wish to establish principles and commitments that will inform their work together to develop and implement the SLG reform proposal. The Parties will encourage their respective Councils (and Council staff) to give effect to the principles and commitments as recorded in this MoU.

1.2 This MoU records the Guiding Principles that the Parties have agreed on and that will serve as the framework and evaluation criteria for the detailed design of the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 The Government's SLG reform programme provides the Parties and their Councils with an opportunity to develop locally led proposals for structural reform and improved local government arrangements.

2.2 The Parties recognise that the challenges facing local government require consideration of governance arrangements that are affordable, sustainable, effective and capable of meeting future community needs.

2.3 The Parties are exploring the potential for a jointly developed reform proposal that may include amalgamation and other structural changes designed to simplify local government and improve outcomes for communities across the districts of the three Councils.

2.4 This MoU is entered into in good faith to demonstrate the Parties' commitment to working collaboratively and constructively together to achieve a successful outcome.

2.4.1 The Parties agree that this MoU in no way records that they (or their respective Councils) are in a legal partnership, joint venture or in any other commercial relationship with each other.

2.4.2 This MoU expresses intentions and is not legally binding, until after all three Councils adopt it by resolution in accordance with clause 5.3.

2.4.3 Any future proposal remains subject to statutory decision-making processes and any requirements imposed by the Government.

3 SHARED AND AGREED PRINCIPLES

The Parties agree that the following principles (Guiding Principles) inform the development and assessment of the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal:

3.1 **Representation and Local Voice:** Representation must acknowledge both resident populations and non-resident ratepayers, with a clear line of sight between communities and decision-making at both local and higher levels.

3.2 **Affordability, Efficiency and Sustainability:** Any proposed model should be capable of demonstrating improved affordability, efficiency, value for money and long-term financial sustainability.

3.3 **Iwi and Hapū Partnerships:** Existing and future obligations to iwi and hapū will be recognised, valued and honoured, including commitments arising from Treaty of Waitangi Settlements, statutory obligations and established relationships.

3.4 **Collaboration:** The proposed arrangements must foster greater collaboration, coordination and consistency across key functions where this improves outcomes for communities.

3.5 **Evidence and Community Input:** The proposal development will be based on robust evidence, analysis, community feedback and stakeholder engagement.

3.6 **Strong Local Voice:** Local identity, local representation and local influence over local priorities and services must be maintained and/or enhanced.

3.7 **No Community is Worse off from Legacy Decisions:** Where reasonable and practicable, communities should not be disadvantaged by historical funding decisions made elsewhere. Legacy assets, reserves, liabilities and rating arrangements must be managed fairly and transparently throughout any transition.

4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DETAILED DESIGN

4.1 The Parties adopt the Guiding Principles as the guiding principles and evaluation criteria for the detailed design phase of the Waihou-Piako-Coromandel Unitary Authority proposal (Stage Two, commencing after 9 August 2026).

4.2 The Guiding Principles are not final arrangements for representation, rating, debt allocation or service delivery. The Parties intend all detailed arrangements developed in Stage Two will be assessed against, and must be consistent with, the Guiding Principles.

4.3 The Guiding Principles may be amended or changed, or further principles added, only by written agreement of all Parties and their Councils.

5 SIGNING AND CONFIRMATION

5.1 This MoU is signed by the Mayors in their representative capacity and in good faith. They will each use their best endeavours to ensure that their respective Councils comply with this MoU.

5.2 Before 5 August 2026, each Party will present this MoU to their Council for consideration as part of the deliberations on whether to adopt the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal.

5.3 If that proposal is adopted, each Party will seek by resolution the adoption of this MoU as a binding agreement between the respective Councils. If it is so adopted by resolution, this MoU will be deemed to be a binding Agreement between the three Councils.

5.4 Nothing in this MoU fetters or requires any Party or their Council to act inconsistently with their or its statutory obligations or decision-making processes.

5.5 Nothing in this MoU predetermines the outcome of any future decision-making process.

5.6 No amendments to this MoU are effective unless the amendment is in writing and signed by all Parties.

6 COOPERATIVE EXCLUSIVITY AND COST SHARING

6.1 **Exclusivity:** Post adoption of the Head Start Waihou-Piako-Coromandel proposal, by the Party's respective Councils, no Party or their Council will enter into formal amalgamation negotiations with another council while this MoU has effect.

6.2 **Cost Sharing:** The Parties and their Councils will meet their own costs but may agree that costs of external independent consultants, (including legal and financial reviews), and community consultation which is applicable to all of the Councils may be covered equally, one-third each, between the Parties.

7 TERM

7.1 This MoU takes effect on the date of signing by all Parties.

7.2 The MoU remains in force and valid unless one or more Councils do not adopt the proposal under clause 5.2 or do not confirm the MoU by resolution in accordance with clause 5.3.

7.3 Once the MoU is adopted under clause 5.3, it can be replaced or terminated by written agreement by all Parties or their respective Councils.

7.4 On termination, the Parties will meet to determine responsibility for any outstanding costs or commitments.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 Although the Parties agree not to actively undertake any media communications about this MoU until such time as the Mayors have signed the MOU, the Parties acknowledge that their respective Councils are subject to the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and their respective Council meeting processes. It is acknowledged that the MoU will become publicly available as part of those processes.

9. ENTIRE UNDERSTANDING

9.1 This MoU records the entire understanding between the Parties in relation to its subject matter and supersedes any prior discussions, correspondence or understandings relating to that subject matter.

Signed by the Mayor of Hauraki District Council

Signature: _____

Toby Adams, Mayor

Date: 4/12/2026

Signed by the Mayor of Matamata-Piako District Council

Signature: _____

Ash Tanner, Mayor

Date: 4/08/2026

Signed by the Mayor of Thames-Coromandel District Council

Signature: _____

Peter Revell, Mayor

Date: 4 August 2026

20th July 2026

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust

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Mayor Ash Tanner
Matamata Piako District Council
PO Box 266
TE AROHA, 3342

Tēnā koe Mayor Ash

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust Submission on local government reorganisation proposals — Support for Option 2: Waikato wide model

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Head Start Programme and the proposed options for local government reorganisation. At the outset, we wish to record our concern regarding the extremely limited timeframe provided for iwi to consider and respond to proposals of this significance.

The Head Start Programme has the potential to fundamentally reshape local government arrangements across the Waikato for decades to come. Decisions of this scale will influence governance structures, resource management, infrastructure investment, environmental stewardship, and the manner in which mana whenua participate in decision-making. They warrant thoughtful consideration, meaningful engagement and sufficient time for iwi to analyse the proposals, consult internally, and provide informed feedback.

Unfortunately, the timeframe provided has not reflected the importance or complexity of the issues under consideration. While Ngāti Hauā has made every effort to engage constructively, compressed consultation periods risk reducing engagement to a compliance exercise rather than a genuine partnership. This approach is inconsistent with the collaborative relationships that the Head Start Programme itself seeks to foster.

Notwithstanding these concerns, Ngāti Hauā welcomes the opportunity to contribute and offers the following comments.

1. Ko wai mātou — Submitter details

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust provides this submission as the Post Settlement Governance Entity established through the Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014. This submission is grounded in the whakapapa, mana whenua, rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga of Ngāti Hauā. Ngāti Hauā descend from the

eponymous ancestor Hauā, a direct descendant of Hoturoa, captain of the Tainui waka. The hapū of Ngāti Hauā are Ngāti Te Oro, Ngāti Werewere, Ngāti Waenganui, Ngāti Te Rangitaupi and Ngāti Rangi Tawhaki. The Ngāti Hauā rohe spans from Te Aroha, south along the Kaimai Range to Te Weraiti, from Te Weraiti west to Maungatautari, then northwest to Te Rapa, from Te Rapa eastward to Mangateparu and then to Te Aroha. Part of the Ngāti Hauā rohe is located within the Waikato Raupatu Claims Area established in 1995.

The Ngāti Hauā boundary includes five local government bodies: Waipā District Council, Matamata-Piako District Council, Waikato District Council, South Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council. Ngāti Hauā holds mana whenua responsibilities across each of these council catchments, particularly where resource management decisions affect Ngāti Hauā lands, waters, wāhi tapu, marae, taonga and communities. Ngāti Hauā has also lodged Te Rautaki Tāmata Ao Tūroa o Hauā with each council, setting out Ngāti Hauā environmental management standards, aspirations and expectations.

2. Te tū a Ngāti Hauā — Position of Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust supports Option 2, the Waikato wide model, as the preferred structural option. Our support is based on the need for a regional model that respects mana whenua, gives practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, protects te taiao, strengthens communities, and enables long-term prosperity for present and future generations.

Ngāti Hauā provides this submission on the basis that future engagement with council partners must be early, genuine, well-resourced and grounded in partnership. Future "Head Start" proposals and the detailed design of any new governance, management and implementation arrangements must be shaped with iwi Māori, not simply consulted on after key decisions have already been made.

3. Ngā take tautoko — Reasons for supporting Option 2

3.1 Mana whenua partnership and regional coordination

The Waikato wide model provides an opportunity to reduce duplication in administration, infrastructure planning, consenting, commercial activity and environmental obligations. From a Ngāti Hauā perspective, regional coordination must also reduce the burden on iwi and hapū who are currently required to engage across multiple councils, processes and planning systems. A more coordinated structure should enable clearer partnership pathways, more consistent recognition of mana whenua, and stronger alignment across catchments and rohe.

3.2 Intergenerational outcomes for whānau, hapū, iwi and communities

Ngāti Hauā considers that a central regional model has the potential to improve long-term affordability, deliver better value for money, and support more efficient services. However, value must be understood broadly. It is not only financial value for ratepayers, but also the wellbeing of whānau, the protection of whenua and wai, the strength of marae and papakāinga, and the ability of future generations to thrive in their own rohe.

3.3 Planning that recognises rohe, marae, papakāinga and rural communities

The new structure should be capable of supporting both urban growth and rural communities. It should enable regional growth strategies, including Future Proof, while recognising that iwi Māori, marae, papakāinga, rural communities and whenua Māori have distinct histories, needs, rights and aspirations. Growth must not occur at the expense of mana whenua relationships with whenua, wai, wāhi tapu or taonga.

3.4 Rangatiratanga, local voice and decision-making close to place

Decision-making powers should be set at the right level, with decisions made as close as practicable to the communities, places and taonga affected by them. For Ngāti Hauā, local voice includes the voices of hapū, marae, whānau and mana whenua. The Waikato wide model should strengthen the region's ability to engage with central government while ensuring that rangatiratanga, local democracy and community ownership are not diminished.

3.5 Kaitiakitanga and a resilient future

Ngāti Hauā supports a model that strengthens te taiao, climate resilience, infrastructure planning and economic performance. The preferred structure must uphold kaitiakitanga and be able to respond to climate-related risks, infrastructure pressures, freshwater challenges and long-term regional change. Short-term thinking must be avoided where it risks costly mistakes in planning, infrastructure and environmental management.

4. Te Tiriti, mana whenua and statutory alignment

Any future model must be designed in a way that gives practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, recognises tino rangatiratanga, honours Māori as tangata whenua, and protects iwi Māori taonga. This requires more than general consultation. It requires shared design, shared decision-making, appropriate resourcing, and enduring Tiriti-based partnership with iwi and hapū.

The model must align with relevant legislative and statutory frameworks, including Joint Management Agreements and Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato — the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River. These frameworks are not optional considerations. They are central to environmental decision-making, iwi partnership and the restoration and protection of the Waikato River and its catchment, and they must not be weakened through structural reform.

5. Ngā tono matua — Key recommendations

5.1 Adopt Option 2, the Waikato wide model, as the preferred option for further development.

5.2 Co-design the next stage of the model with iwi Māori, including Ngāti Hauā, before key governance and implementation decisions are finalised.

5.3 Provide for Tiriti-based partnership with iwi and hapū at governance, management, planning and operational levels.

5.4 Recognise and protect mana whenua, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga, mātauranga Māori, wāhi tapu, taonga and the relationship of Ngāti Hauā with whenua and wai.

5.5 Protect and strengthen existing statutory arrangements, including Joint Management Agreements and Te Ture Whaimana.

5.6 Design the model to deliver coordinated regional infrastructure planning, environmental management, housing and papakāinga outcomes, and economic development.

5.7 Ensure local voice, marae voice, hapū voice, rural perspectives and community identity are embedded in decision-making.

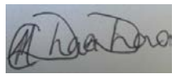
5.8 Use robust evidence, transparent assumptions and clear trade-off analysis, alongside iwi knowledge and mātauranga Māori, to inform final decisions.

6. Whakakapi — Conclusion

Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust supports Option 2 because it provides the strongest opportunity to build a coordinated, resilient and future-ready regional system. That system must be iwi-led in its design, Tiriti-led in its governance, and grounded in the wellbeing of te taiao, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities over the next 20 to 30 years.

Ngāti Hauā seeks ongoing, early and genuine engagement with council partners on the development of the preferred model, including governance arrangements, iwi Māori partnership mechanisms, environmental responsibilities, mātauranga Māori, local decision-making pathways and implementation resourcing. The reform process should uphold the mana of Ngāti Hauā and ensure that decisions affecting our rohe are made with us, not for us.

Naaku noa, naa



Muna Wharawhara
Chairperson