

FAQs – Hutt City Council backs regional Head Start proposal

Why has Hutt City Council decided to support the proposal?

Council voted on 5 August to join a regional proposal that aims to shape the future of local government across the wider Wellington region. The decision means Lower Hutt will continue to be involved in the discussions and help shape what happens next.

What is the proposal?

The proposal would create a single unitary council responsible for regional and city-wide services, with locally elected community councils making decisions on local issues.

What happens next?

Mayor Ken Laban will take Hutt City Council's position to the Mayoral Forum on 7 August. Participating councils have until 9 August 2026 to submit their Head Start proposals to the Government.

Cabinet is expected to consider proposals in September 2026. If accepted, they will move into a detailed design and community engagement phase between October 2026 and March 2027. Final Government decisions are expected in May 2027, with any changes intended to be implemented before the October 2028 local elections.

What services could be managed regionally?

The proposal suggests regional responsibilities could include planning and consenting, transport and public transport, regional policies and infrastructure strategy.

What decisions would stay local?

The proposal includes community councils with funding to make decisions on local priorities, services and community outcomes, such as pools, parks, libraries and events. Community councils are intended to ensure decisions that are best made close to communities continue to reflect local needs and priorities.

What happens to councils that decide not to join the Wellington proposal?

Councils can choose whether to join the voluntary Head Start proposal.

The Government has indicated that councils which do not submit a Head Start proposal, or whose proposal does not progress, may instead be considered through a compulsory “Backstop” reorganisation process after the 2028 local elections.

The Government will decide what local government arrangements best serve the Wellington region as part of its wider local government reforms.

Who makes the final decision?

The Government makes the final decision on whether any new local government structure is established. Council's vote only determines whether Lower Hutt participates in the Head Start proposal for our region.

How has the community been involved so far?

Council has undertaken community engagement including public feedback, a stakeholder forum, stakeholder discussions, engagement with Mana Whenua and participation in a regional community reference group.

Will residents get another chance to have their say?

Yes. If the Government accepts the proposal, there will be further opportunities for communities to provide feedback during the detailed design phase before any final decisions are made.