

Provincial Sector Meeting – Wellington

5/6 August 2026

Regional Updates

First up, we went around the regions looking at who was going into Headstart etc. It was a mixed bag, with some districts not at all happy regarding the proposed changes.

Kapiti felt they had had robust conversations with neighbours. They received around 3,000 submissions, but what happens next is anyone's guess?

Manawatū had made a unanimous decision to sign the **MOU** with four other councils and work together under a federation-type model. The aim is to demonstrate accountability, etc.

Tararua felt it had been a terrible process and was keen to sign the **MOU** and work under a federation model.

Ruapehu has had discussion with **Taupō**, they are happy with the federation model, with the possibility that perhaps part goes north and part goes south.

Multi-Party Panel Discussion

There was a multi-party panel discussion with representatives from **Labour, New Zealand First, the Greens and Opportunity candidates**. There were no National candidates.

I felt **Andy Foster's** comments stood out. He said that local government is an important **leg** allowing us to talk to our communities.

The problem with the reform is that it is adopting **form before function**. This seems to be creating a lot of fishhooks.

His advice was to **give yourself options**, keep engaging, as the status quo is no longer fit for purpose.

Matt Prosser – UK Local Government Reform

Former Dorset Council CE (and current Wellington City Council CE) Matt

Prosser reflected on the UK's local government reforms.

This was an excellent presentation and he is an outstanding communicator. A copy of the presentation was referred to in an email of **13 August 2026** and with our last Council meeting RMP update.

[Matt Prosser speech.pdf](#)

Zoom recording: [Matt Prosser CE Wellington City Council - Lessons from UK local government amalgamation](#) (recorded from a previous LGNZ Zoom series). Login via Ākona to view.

Some of his thoughts on the Dorset Amalgamation:

- In the UK, it took **13 months** to push through the amalgamation needed to obtain long-term financial sustainability.
- Rates capping has been in place since **2008**.
- There are effectively **165 parish councils**, below District/Borough councils (responsible for housing, planning and the environment), which are below County Councils (social care, health, waste).

- The biggest challenge is **social care**, not infrastructure.
- The focus was on **financial sustainability**, rather than reducing rates.
- It was important to ensure that vital services were maintained & investment progressed.

Non-Financial Implications

One of the benefits was having a **single voice to central government**, allowing for better strategic conversations.

For business, there was one organisation to talk to and one set of plans.

Hear local voice

Leverage scale & efficiency but retain local voice

What We Can Learn from the UK

Matt's key messages were:

1. Get the **regional structure** right. Very important
2. Get the **cost reduction- structure and culture** right.
3. Ensure the **local voice is not lost**.
4. Have a **loud voice to central government**.
5. Simplify the **customer journey**, including things such as a single planning process.
6. **Take people on the journey** – start now and ensure organisations are change ready - “**Birth, death, and taxes – change is unavoidable.**”
7. Cleanse data and think carefully about how policy etc should be merged.
8. Ask: **How could activities be done differently? How could we do better?**
9. Be **customer-focused and based on community outcomes**.
10. Improve services while **reducing costs**.
11. Improve opportunities for **children/ next generation**.
12. There should be **no service cuts** – rather, ask whether services can be delivered differently.

The key message was that services could be **delivered differently while still achieving better outcomes for communities**.

UNitry model now 7 yrs old – digital transformation has been accelerated.

There is still rates capping 3% plus 2% for social care.

In Dorset 82% of Income from rates.

Rates not going down but services still delivered – every time we walk out the door we are affected by Local Government services.

New podcast: Podcast episode

At R&P, you heard a preview of the first podcast in our new series to support the Long-term Plan process. Log in to Ākōna to listen.

- [Podcast: LTP in the time of rates capping](#)

The above notes were transcribed by AI

Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

Councillor Fi Dalgety