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## Council Workshop NOTES

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**Date:** Tuesday 12 May 2026  
**Time:** 1.33 pm  
**Venue:** Camellia Chambers, Civic Offices,  
53 Hereford Street, Christchurch

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### Present

Chairperson	Mayor Phil Mauger
Deputy Chairperson	Deputy Mayor Victoria Henstock
Members	Councillor Kelly Barber
	Councillor David Cartwright
	Councillor Melanie Coker
	Councillor Pauline Cotter
	Councillor Celeste Donovan
	Councillor Tyrone Fields
	Councillor Nathaniel Herz Jardine
	Councillor Yani Johanson
	Councillor Aaron Keown
	Councillor Sam MacDonald
	Councillor Jake McLellan
	Councillor Andrei Moore
	Councillor Mark Peters
	Councillor Tim Scandrett

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The agenda was dealt with in the following order.

## **1. Apologies Ngā Whakapāha**

Apologies were received from Councillors Harrison-Hunt and Scandrett for a partial absence and the Mayor for an early departure.

**Secretarial note:** Councillor Harrison-Hunt was to join the meeting via audio-visual link but wasn't present for the duration of the workshop.

Councillor Fields joined the workshop at 1.35 pm during Item 2.

Councillor MacDonald left the workshop at 1.45 pm and returned at 2.06 pm during Item 2.

Councillor Scandrett left the workshop at 2.02 pm and returned at 2.16 pm during Item 2.

## **2. Ratepayer Assistance Scheme overview**

The following presenters joined the table to provide Councillors with background information on the proposed national Ratepayer Assistance Scheme (RAS) and to outline the opportunity it presents for local government and ratepayers (refer to the presentation in the agenda).

Tony Moore, Principal Advisor – Climate Resilience, Christchurch City Council

Scott Necklen, Chief Executive of Local Government New Zealand

Mark Butcher, Chief Executive of Local Government Funding Agency

Ben Fahy, Head of Strategic Communications for Rewiring Aotearoa

Hugo Ellis, Partner of Cameron Partners

### **Key presentation points**

- Cost of living increases, an aging population (many of whom are on a fixed income), and increasing rates due to the need to invest in infrastructure (for example in Auckland there is an area where existing septic tanks are coming to the end of their life and will need to be replaced with an area wide waste disposal network) ,is putting increased pressure on local communities.
- The development of the Ratepayer Assistance Scheme is intended to provide an additional tool to assist councils and ratepayers to manage affordability pressures.
- The scheme has been in development for several years and is being led by Local Government New Zealand, the Local Government Funding Agency, and external advisers.
- The Ratepayer Assistance Scheme is modelled closely on the Local Government Funding Agency, drawing on its experience in achieving efficiencies through aggregation, centralisation, and access to low-cost finance. The Local Government Funding Agency has achieved about \$40m in savings to the sector every year (\$500m to \$600m since inception).
- It is proposed as a council-owned shared service, operating as a council-controlled organisation, that would lend directly to ratepayers rather than to councils.
- The scheme, subject to Government support, would operate as a low-interest loan scheme enabling ratepayers to defer certain property-related costs.
- Loans would be repaid with interest either as a lump sum or through an ongoing levy attached to the property.
- Three initial loan products are proposed. These include:


1. A nationally consistent rates postponement option, targeted at households on fixed incomes, that would allow eligible ratepayers to defer rates and other charges until a later point, such as sale of the property.
  2. Development contribution deferrals to spread the cost of upfront infrastructure charges over time (i.e. removes one of the barriers to property development with the upfront payment replaced with a series of annual payment – development levy).
  3. Property improvement loans to support investments such as insulation, renewable energy (e.g. for the purchase and installation of solar panels) and resilience upgrades.
- The scheme would rely on the security of a levy equivalent to a rate charge, enabling a high credit rating and access to very competitive borrowing rates.
  - The scheme has progressed significantly over the past year, with a final business case submitted to central government in November 2025.
  - Eight councils, together with LGNZ, LGFA, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, and Rewiring Aotearoa, are actively advancing the initiative. Christchurch has been asked to indicate its in-principle support as a step toward possible implementation in 2027, with further Council consideration planned.
  - The presentation (page 23 of the agenda) included a summary of indicative financial modelling, which suggests the scheme could reach break-even within several years and generate surpluses that could be returned to shareholders or used to reduce borrowing costs for ratepayers.
  - A government decision is expected in early 2026, and if approved, establishment could occur within approximately twelve months.
  - A presentation was provided by Rewiring Aotearoa (attached). Key points were:
    1. Rewiring Aotearoa is an independent evidenced based charity looking at economic energy security and emissions.
    2. There is a big benefit in electric homes (estimated at \$7,000 in savings per household per year). An issue is a lack of capital to purchase solar and battery upgrades. The RAS will address this.
    3. The amount spent per day on fossil fuels by Christchurch homes is \$2.1m (\$760m per year).
    4. The lowest incomes homes spend proportionally more on energy 28.4% than high incomes homes (7.5%).
    5. Solar is now the cheapest form of energy per kWh.
    6. The annual saving for an electric home in Christchurch with 9kW rooftop solar and 10Wh batteries added is \$2.4k.
    7. The solar adoption rate in Christchurch is 4%.

### **Key discussion points**

- It was noted that Council could not give in principle support for the scheme via a workshop, and that staff would prepare a report detailing their advice on the RAS proposal, which will need to be formally considered by the Council.
- The presenters stressed that councils and ratepayers would not be forced to join the scheme. Rather they can choose to opt in to use the scheme, and local authorities would retain control over which products are made available in their districts.
- The key advantages identified include the debt remaining off Council balance sheets, interest rates below standard mortgage rates, and long repayment timeframes.
- Administration, including invoicing, would be managed by the scheme rather than councils.

- A risk is that ratepayers may perceive RAS levies as equivalent to rates, affecting perceptions of affordability.
- Potential wider benefits, include improved household wellbeing, lower energy bills, and support for the Council's greenhouse gas emissions reduction objectives. Local community energy groups are identified as being supportive of Christchurch offering home energy loan products under the scheme.
- However, there are some risks that will need to be mitigated against. For example, that there is conveyancing process that so that property developers pass on the development contributions savings to the property owner that arise from the use of the scheme.
- Also, previous issues around the installation of solar panels via the Solar Zero scheme was mentioned. This can be de-risked through a better business model and the property owner owning, rather than renting, the panels. ECCA is also managing the preferred supplier agreement.
- There was a general discussion around solar energy. This included whether there was potential for increased labour costs from a big surge in people wanting to install solar energy and who would be eligible. In response the presenters noted that this was not the experience in Australia which has experience a big uptake of solar energy installation. It was noted that lower income households generally spend a higher percentage of income on energy.

#### **Attachments**

- A Item 2 - Rewiring Aotearoa presentation to Christchurch City Council on RAS [⇒](#) 

### **4. Items Closed to the Public Ngā Take mō te wāhanga o te hui e rāhui ana ki te hunga tūmatanui**

At 2.18 pm the workshop went into public excluded to receive Item 5 Government Reform Update.

The Mayor left the workshop at the conclusion of Item 5 and did not return.

Deputy Mayor Henstock took the Chair at 3.09 pm for Item 3 when the workshop moved back into open. Councillors Cartwright and Johanson were not present.

Councillor Cartwright returned to the workshop at 3.12 pm during Item 3.  
Councillor Johanson returned to the meeting at 3.13 pm during Item 3.

### **3. Three Waters Quarterly Activities Update (January - March 2026)**

Gavin Hutchinson joined the table to provide Councillors with an update on Three Waters operations for the period January to March 2026, based on the Quarterly Report prepared by the Three Waters Unit (refer to the report in the agenda).

#### **Key presentation points**

- Persistent odour events at the Christchurch Wastewater Treatment Plant during January and February, which generated a high volume of complaints and resulted in abatement notices from Environment Canterbury (ECan). Operational responses were implemented to manage impacts on nearby residents and to progress corrective actions, including the decision to progress increased aeration of the oxidation ponds. The abatement notice actions have now been withdrawn.
- In mid-February, the detection of total coliforms in the Rawhiti supply zone, following a positive E. coli result from a nearby private supply, led to the precautionary implementation of a boil water notice.
- Severe weather events in mid-February caused significant flooding across Banks Peninsula and resulted in an abatement notice for unconsented overflows.
- A non-compliance was issued for boil water notices for Little River and Wainui due to source water quality issues and infrastructure damage. Temporary water supply measures, including tankering, were put in place while repairs and remedial actions were undertaken.
- Additional storage tanks installed at Birdlings Flat which were used to tackle a recent fire.

**Key discussion points**

- The current abatement notice with ECan for Bromley has been cancelled and staff are meeting with ECan on 14 May 2026 to discuss the notice for Banks Peninsula which is essentially a request for information.
- Staff are coming up with a planned programme to consent the engineered overflows into Lyttleton Harbour.
- The Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai are developing guidelines and quality assurance rules requirements for level 3 supplies. This will influence the provision of additional community drinking water stations. Staff will follow up on where these are at.
- Staff welcome feedback on the content and presentation of the Quarterly Update report to support the development of a useful and regular information update for Councillors.
- The aerators are on-site at Bromley. There has been a month delay in the switchboard build. A percentage of them will go onto diesel generators. Staff to put an update on the Newline for the weekly update.
- Staff will provide an update on community water stations including when the Burnside community drinking water station will get a shelf similar to the one Keyes Road.
- Staff will provide an update on how much are we spending to be compliant with the current drinking water standards (without seeking an exemption).
- When the results of the review by Taumata Arowai for the boil water notice in Rawhiti supply zone have come in these will be shared with Councillors.

**Meeting concluded at 3.23 pm.**