



Briefing: RAS Local Government Ratepayer Assistance Scheme

05 June 2025 – 5.00pm

Attendees

Elected Members: Cr Brown, Cr Dyer, Cr Edwards, Deputy Mayor Lewis, Cr Mitchell, Cr Morgan, Cr Parkin, Cr Shaw, Cr Stallinger, Cr Tupou.

Staff: J Livschitz, Group Chief Financial Officer; A Blackshaw, Director Neighbourhoods and Communities; J Griffiths, Director Strategy and Engagement; J Kingsbury, Director Economy and Development; A Geddes, Director Environment and Sustainability, J Young, Democracy Advisor

Apologies

Mayor Barry, Cr Barratt, Cr Briggs

Presenters

Finance Transaction Services Manager, Partner, Cameron Partners, Policy and Government Relations Specialist, Rewiring Aotearoa, Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ)

Key Objectives of the Briefing

The purpose of the briefing is to provide an understanding of the Ratepayer Assistance Scheme (RAS) to elected members and seek Hutt City Council's support and contribution to the goal of raising \$2.5M in funds.

Introduction

The Rates Assistance Scheme (RAS) is a joint initiative by LGNZ, LGFA, several metro councils, and Cameron Partners to address affordability challenges in local government charges. RAS aims to help councils support ratepayers through flexible payment options and low-cost financing. It would be owned by local authorities off-balance sheet and could be used for Development Contributions/Levies, Property Improvement Loans, and Rates Postponement. Cameron Partners has noted strong central government backing, including a letter of support from Minister Watts. The Minister has directed officials to begin work on RAS in August 2025 and encouraged local government to complete its development. To proceed, an additional \$2.5M in sector funding is needed. Without this, RAS will not move forward. The goal is to have all necessary information by year-end for both local and central government to make a final decision on implementation.

Presentation by Finance Transaction Service Manager, Partner, Cameron Partners, Policy and Government Relations Specialist, Rewiring Aotearoa, Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ)

Slide 1 – RAS Local Government Ratepayer Assistance Scheme.

Slide 2 – Ratepayer Assistance Scheme – the opportunity for local government.

Slide 3 – Executive summary and contents.

Slide 4 – The RAS Opportunity.

Slide 5 – The RAS Opportunity.

Slide 6 – Deferred DCs / DLs.

Slide 7 – Deferred DCs / DLs.

Slide 8 – Property Improvement Loans.

Slide 9 – Property Improvement Loans.

Slide 10 – Property Improvement Loans.

Slide 11 – Rates Postponement.

Slide 12 – Rates Postponement.

Slide 13 – What it is and how it works.

Slide 14 – What it is and how it works.

Slide 15 – RAS Financial Business case.

Slide 16 – Development to date and next steps.

slide 17 – Support and funding commitment required.

Slide 18 – What to do next if you are interested.

Slide 19 – Appendix – Proposed Governance during development.

Slide 20 – Questions

Questions and discussion points

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that LGFA will handle all treasury and financing, but the interest rate terms are still being finalised. They expect the RAS will not bear interest rate risk, with rates likely set and reviewed annually.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that the RAS application process would follow criteria similar to council rates postponement schemes,

with a nationally standardised approach. However, each council can decide whether to adopt this model.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that the ability of the RAS to impose a levy will rank ahead of the bank, just like a local government rates charge ranks ahead of a bank. He noted that the amount involved should not be large enough to cause concerns. However this has not yet been navigated with the banks.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that in terms of the three products; Development Contributions/Levies, Property Improvement Loans and Rates Postponement, some councils have indicated that they are interested in one particular product but have not signalled they would not want to use the other products as well. Cameron Partners further stated that other councils have not requested just one singular package.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that the RAS administration costs would be absorbed by councils, adding that there would be initial establishment costs to ensure an appropriate interface between the RAS and the specific council. They further stated that there is existing precedent where some district councils charge regional councils rates on their invoice, which is a system that Cameron Partners is seeking to replicate. They noted resourcing within council would be required for the Property Investment Loans, for councils to ensure they have certified the suppliers of the particular product.

In response to a question from a member, Policy and Government Relations Specialist, Rewiring Aotearoa, advised that the certification process for certain products would be done on a national basis. There is precedent because ECA provide a list of approved providers and the vision would be a nationally combined list. However, there may be some people who only provide a service locally as well. Further navigation on the matter remains.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that there is no intention to extend RAS to water service fees, it has been avoided on purpose because of the uncertainty.

In response to a question from a member, Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) advised they are happy to supply the letter from Minister Watts that shows the Minister's support as that letter is as good a commitment given without a Cabinet decision. Policy and Government Relations Specialist, Rewiring Aotearoa further added that she met with Hon Megan Woods as Rewiring Aotearoa is a NGO, meaning conversations with different people can be had allowing bipartisan support and assurance.

In response to a question from a member, Cameron Partners advised that if Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, Hutt City Councils, as well as Hamilton and Tauranga Councils are in, then it is a viable proposition.

Briefing materials

Attachment 1 – Presentation:

The briefing closed at 5.49pm