

Julie Taylor

Rates

We acknowledge that Regional Council rate increases have been amongst the lowest in our region, however, local government rates are increasing in excess of CPI. Ratepayers are in a cost-of-living crisis. Growth cannot be an excuse as it is simply a factor you will have to deal with.

How will you manage Rates increases?

1. Limit any increaases in Rates to the rate of inflation.
2. Ensure council spending is transparent across all areas.
3. Focus on core services rather than nice-to-haves.

Comments (200 words max):

The cost-of-living crisis must be addressed when considering council expenditure. We are spending public money, so need to be accountable to our ratepayers. Transparency around financial decisions is vital. In the the current economic climate, it's important to ensure that there is no wasteful or unnecessary spending.

Julie Taylor

Debt

Debt has been the easy option for local government entities to resort to in order to hold rates down in the face of inflation, growth, and a need to be re-elected. Councils such as Hamilton and others have had rating downgrades pointing to a failure by Councils to prudently manage their finances.

How will you deal with debt?

1. Ensure spending is focussed on core services.
2. Future planning vital for key infrastructure maintenance.
3. Robust accountability and transparency within all areas of council expenditure.

Comments (200 words max):

Debt is a complex issue. The Council needs to maintain core infrastructure and services. Lack of investment in key infrastructure can lead to much more pressing and expensive problems in the future (for example, Wellington's water leaks). I don't believe that endless borrowing is sustainable, however slashing budgets to reduce debt may also create downstream problems.

Julie Taylor

Amalgamation

The amalgamation of some or all of Waikato Councils has been an issue the Chamber has been canvassing for some years. Auckland has been amalgamated, and the net result is seen as positive for their community with little diminution of democracy.

"For the 2025/2026 rating year, Auckland Council has announced a total rates increase of 5.8%, equating to approximately \$223 per year for the average residential property."

What is your considered position on Amalgamation?



For amalgamation



Against amalgamation

If in favour of change, how would you implement it?

1. A collaborative approach - locals will not want to lose a sense of community ownership.
2. Eliminating roles and expenditure that is replicated or 'doubled up' across the various councils.
3. Ensuring the entire region feels represented within the new structure.

Comments (200 words max):

Any transition will need a collaborative approach so that all communities in the Waikato feel valued and listened to. Cost savings will be able to be achieved as there is currently some overlapping or doubling-up of roles and services.