

## **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. Councillors need to have oversight over operating budgets with avenues to explore the detail
2. Explore revenue opportunities through local and commercial partnerships
3. Imbed policy and enable staffing to explore revenue opportunities

### **Comments (200 words max):**

Strong & visible leadership.

Councils need fresh revenue streams through partnerships and sponsorships. The rates burden cannot always fall on businesses, farmers, and households. Embedding innovation within staff is essential to unlock those opportunities.

I have strong business connections throughout Waipā and the King Country because I live and run my business here. I will use that visibility to drive opportunities and explore new revenue streams.

My experience as a Waipā Councillor over the past 12 years will help me navigate Waipā–King Country priorities around the Council table when rates are set. It is a team effort with many differing views, and you need experience to get the best outcome.

With tougher oversight and smarter revenue, we can keep services strong, protect ratepayers, and deliver real value for every dollar spent. Ratepayers deserve Councillors who know Waipā, who know the King Country, and who can deliver the best outcomes for you

## **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. I would advocate that debt is only used for genuine long-term intergenerational infrastructure
2. Strengthen financial discipline so rates reflect true costs, avoiding hidden burdens on future generations
3. Explore with staff opportunities for sustainable revenue streams with careful spending

### **Comments (200 words max):**

The Regional Council effectively has no debt when you consider the investment fund it currently manages and the value of the assets it owns that are debt-funded through the LGFA.

As a Waipā–King Country Councillor, I would not support any future borrowing for operational expenses or for capital projects that are not essential long-term assets. Borrowing for the wrong reasons only shifts today's costs onto tomorrow's ratepayers. We've already seen the results — some councils have had their credit ratings downgraded.

As a local dairy farmer, I understand debt, and in the current economic environment it requires careful management.

By being disciplined and transparent, councils can keep rates fair, maintain strong credit ratings, and build trust with their communities.

## **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. Make the case for change, gather support around the Council table
2. Business & community engagement
3. Enable a Legislative & Policy Framework working with local councils and central government

**Comments (200 words max):**

After 12 years on Waipā District Council and as deputy-chair of Future Proof, I've seen too much duplication and isolated work across our local government system. Amalgamating departments and councils would reduce costs, remove waste, and deliver better services. In the Waipā/King Country ward alone, we currently have three councils, three mayors, and dozens of councillors. This level of over-representation is inefficient and ultimately unsustainable for ratepayers.

Amalgamation works best when it is carefully planned and openly explained. Lessons can be learned from the Auckland amalgamation and this can be used to make the first steps to set out the case for change. I know through my experience that businesses and communities WILL be concerned about losing their local voice so when amalgamation comes to our doorstep let's be ready to ensure local voice stays strong.