

Rates

Local government rates are increasing well 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. Recognise full council costs and align with CPI, Growth and Resilience to keep
2. Adopt smarter asset and debt management to phase investments fairly.
3. Diversify revenue streams so rates aren't the only funding lever.

Comments

Council needs to engage openly and honestly with residents about trade-offs and the long term benefits when managing rates increases.

For example if we want to open up the city to development, increase housing then we need to invest in updating and building new water infrastructure to manage the growth and this comes at great cost. Deferring work in important areas like this means that service quality declines and development is halted.

Council needs to communicate what rates pay for and use transparent targeted rates for core services so that people know what they are paying for.

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 have had rating downgrades pointing to a failure by Councils to prudently manage their finances.

How will you deal with debt?

1. Expanding revenue sources beyond rates.
2. Prioritising and phasing capital projects and limiting any new borrowing to ess
3. Tightening operational efficiency and building reserves and liquidity.

Comments

Hamilton City Council has one of the highest debt levels in New Zealand local government (driven by rapid growth, water/transport infrastructure, and borrowing to fund capital projects). To restore its credit rating and strengthen financial resilience, the council needs to take a balanced approach.

Everything we do must consider and include the collective. It is not one sole person's responsibility to deal with debt. It is important to look to our experts internally and externally to the organisation to ensure due diligence.

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. Start with shared services, not full political amalgamation.
2. Identify priority services for shared delivery.
3. Engage mana whenua, government and ratepayers early to build legitimacy.

Comments

I am in favour of collaboration and amalgamation for core services such as water, transport, waste management, IT services as a start.

Amalgamating core services across Hamilton City Council and neighbouring councils is a proven way to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and strengthen bargaining power. But it needs to be done carefully to avoid duplication, political pushback, or loss of community voice.

IAWAI - Flowing Waters the joint Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council CCO Council Controlled Organisation for managing water services is a positive step in this direction.