

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. Clarify council's core mandate and crystallise essential services.
2. Review all expenditure against service relevance and value-for-money.
3. Audit underutilised council assets to redirect value.

Comments

Ratepayers are not ATMs. They are people, living in the real world, juggling real time issues.

Families shouldn't need to borrow or resort to charity to pay their rates. Businesses shouldn't be driven outside the city boundary to afford space. Both these things are happening.

Rates must reflect restraint and return. We will protect Hamilton's identity by ensuring council lives within its means and delivers value - not just invoices:

1. Clarify council's core mandate and crystallise essential services.

Rates must reflect real value - not just rising costs. Hamilton deserves fiscal clarity – we will build community trust, consistently ensuring council focuses on what it's truly mandated to deliver.

2. Review all expenditure against service relevance and value-for-money.

Audit every department: Are we delivering the right services with the right level of resourcing? Are we delivering value for money? If not, we stop. If it's grey, we review - asking whether it can be delivered more efficiently by council or more impactfully by others.

3. Audit underutilised council assets to redirect value.

We'll identify surplus land, outdated facilities, and low-return holdings that can be repurposed, leased, or divested to support frontline services and infrastructure.

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. Pause non-essential projects and introduce strict debt caps.
2. Unlock asset value and cut overhead.
3. Build long-term financial discipline.

Comments

Debt is a tool – used unwisely, it becomes a trap. I'll draw a line under reactive spending and build a council that earns trust through discipline, transparency, and courage. Fact – we can't all have everything we want when we want it.

1. Pause non-essential projects and introduce strict debt caps.

If it's not essential, we wait. I'll champion a prioritisation plan that pauses or defers non-core projects and introduce strict borrowing limits tied to revenue, requiring independent oversight for any new debt. Only projects that solve actual problems. No vanity projects, no PR-driven spending

2. Unlock asset value and cut overhead.

Unlock value from assets that are not strategic or no longer serve Hamilton and reduce council headcount and consultancy spend where possible. Every dollar saved goes to paying down debt.

3. Build long-term financial discipline.

I'll embed a culture of service and discipline across council - clear debt reduction targets and value-for-money principles in procurement and service delivery – with accountability. Major spending will require robust business cases.

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. Lead the reform, don't wait for Wellington;
2. Reduce duplication and overhead.
3. Start with shared services – prove value before systems/structure change.

Comments

Amalgamation is coming. That being so, we better shape it.

Amalgamation must serve the people - it must deliver efficiencies without compromising representation or local voice. With the learnings from Auckland, we can front foot the pitfalls. Let's lead the reform – as a partner, not the 'big brother'.

I was in Auckland when the Super City was being formed. Is it perfect – no. But anything must be better than 11 mayors plus a chair, 12 council governance structures and 12 operating models to sustain. Identify and test efficiency assumptions, make sure all duplication is stripped out – no need for big consultancy firms (substance not brand and focus on local).

Start with shared services to prove value. This cannot just be about systems or structure change. The 'why' for amalgamation must be achieved – for the people!