

Mike Pettit

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. Commit to line-by-line budget reviews, focusing Council on core services first — roads, water, waste and community safety – before committing to “nice to have” projects.
2. Develop mixed funding models. For major facilities like libraries, events centres or sports hubs, pursue charitable trusts, sponsorship, and government co-funding so the full cost does not fall on ratepayers.
3. Increase transparency of spending with open reporting so the public can see where their money goes and hold Council to account.

Comments

Ratepayers are in a cost-of-living crisis. Waipā's rates increases must be brought back. I will endeavour to make sure Council lives within its means, gets back to basics, and only invests in projects that deliver real value for money. In short, an internal look at saving money, review procurement procedures leading to less variations, philanthropic funding streams, addition revenue streams and open accountability across areas of council.

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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. Use debt only where it is backed by a clear, repayable revenue stream (e.g., development contributions or long-term asset funding) – NOT to fund operational shortfall.
2. Introduce tighter debt oversight, with reporting to the public on significant borrowing decisions.
3. Look for efficiencies and cost-sharing through partnerships before turning to the debt option.

Comments

Borrowing to fund operational shortfalls is not sustainable. It hides today's problems and passes them on to tomorrow's ratepayers. I will lead a council that treats debt as a last resort — and only where it funds long-life infrastructure. If we are serious about reducing debt we need to do things differently; an internal look at saving money, review procurement procedures leading to less variations, philanthropic funding streams, addition revenue streams and open accountability across areas of council. Just thinking off loading waters debt onto a CCO through Waikato Waters Done Well and not changing our mindset will only end us back in an even worse situation for the ratepayer.

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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. Support shared services between councils where it reduces duplication and delivers savings (e.g. back-office functions, procurement).
2. Preserve Waipā's decision-making independence, ensuring our unique rural and urban communities retain their voice with Waipā as a leader.
3. Strengthen cross-council collaboration through regional forums, without removing accountability.

Comments

I am not for amalgamation as an immediate solution. Amalgamation risks creating a large, centralised bureaucracy that is more distant from Waipā's communities. Local government should stay local. The better approach is in the short/medium term is to collaborate and share services where they make sense. I then believe amalgamation discussions can take place to explore the concept through completing cost benefit analysis and gaining feedback from our communities. What we do not want to do is lose oversight though of our district. We would need to see who our most advantageous partners would be if it comes to amalgamation.