

From: [Official Information](#)
To: [Official Information](#)
Subject: Final response - LGOIMA 420748 - [Official Information](#) - LTP rates raises
Date: Thursday, 5 September 2024 7:55:21 a.m.
Attachments: [image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image008.png](#)
[image009.png](#)
[image010.png](#)

Kia ora,

We refer to your information request below. Hamilton City Council provides the following response.

Your request:

I have paid a portion of these rates at the previous invoice (\$802) + 6% to adjust for inflation, so \$850.12.

I am querying the remainder of the invoice on the following grounds:

- Based on my own interactions with the local community, I believe it is unlikely that you have community support for your long term plan and accompanying rates rise, and
- This large rates rise and the following projected rates rises are required due to past, present, and future budgeting that is heavily serviced by debt. As debt is generally a high risk, costly financial strategy, relying heavily on debt to finance council plans is not in accordance with prudent financial management, which is your obligation under the Local Government Act 2002.

To resolve the query:

Can you please demonstrate that HCC has community support for its long term plan, which these rates are based on. The recent survey which asked for feedback on the Long Term Plan will be sufficient if you can provide evidence that the majority of respondents (over 50%) supported the long term plan with accompanying rates rises.

Please confirm that HCC has met its legal obligation to comply with the Local Government Act 2002 section below regarding prudent financial management specifically in regards to its utilization of debt. Please provide an explanation, with supporting evidence, that HCC's borrowing has been prudent and has promoted the current and future interests of the community.

Our response:

- **Can you please demonstrate that HCC has community support for its long term plan, which these rates are based on. The recent survey which asked for feedback on the Long Term Plan will be sufficient if you can provide evidence that the majority of respondents (over 50%) supported the long term plan with accompanying rates rises.**

Local authorities are required to undertake 'Special Consultative Procedure' (SCP) on a Long-Term Plan in accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002. SCP includes a requirement to provide a consultation period of a minimum of one-month, and an opportunity for persons to present their views to the local authority. Section 78 of the Local Government Act states that a local authority "must, in the course of its decision-making process in relation to a matter, give consideration to the views and preferences of persons likely to be affected by, or to have an interest in, the matter".

Hamilton City Council undertook the consultation for the 2024-34 Long-Term Plan during the period of 19 March – 21 April 2024, during which nearly 3,000 individuals, businesses and organisations had their say on the proposals set out in the draft Long-Term Plan – including the proposed rates increase. An opportunity for verbal submissions to the Long-Term Plan was held 15- 17 May 2024. Councillors deliberated on 4 June 2024, taking into account the submissions received and any queries in result of the submissions. Significant changes were made in the final Plan as a result of this feedback – including a reduction in the proposed rates increase for 2024-25. The final Long-Term Plan was adopted by Council on 4 July 2024.

The process undertaken fulfils the requirements of consultation and decision making set out by the Local Government Act. It is important to note that, while Long-Term Plans are subject to extensive public engagement as set out above, they are not 'referenda' on the many individual issues contained within them.

More information is available at <https://hamilton.govt.nz/strategies-plans-and-projects/long-term-plan/>

You can also watch the Long Term Plan public submissions see below. This is where our Elective Members made the decision on the rates raises and other part of our Long Term Plan.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnJagxsi7YM> – Day 1
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSnt2J8EubE> – Day 2
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksAto-rJdvA> – Day 3

<https://hamilton.govt.nz/your-council/meetings/calendar/detail/ordinary-council-202407040930> - This is the vote we took from the public submissions.

- **Please provide an explanation, with supporting evidence, that HCC's borrowing has been prudent and has promoted the current and future interests of the community.**

Audit NZ audits the LTP document. They are required to audit our compliance with the requirement, as set out in the Local Government Act 2002, to maintain a balanced budget, as well as our financial strategy. The audit opinion is included in the LTP document.

Of particular note to your question, Council's financial strategy allows us to use debt to pay for capital projects. This allows the cost of key assets that will be used by multiple generations of Hamiltonians, to be shared amongst those that will use them, not just today's ratepayers. However, there are strict debt limits that we must follow, as set by the Local Government Funding Agency. Our long-term plan ensures we remain within these limits in every year, with a small buffer for any unforeseen events.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngaa mihi
Keeley Faulkner
Official Information Coordinator
Legal services
Governance & Assurance Team | Partnerships, communication & Maori
Email: officialinformation@hcc.govt.nz



Hamilton City Council | Private Bag 3010 | Hamilton 3240 | www.hamilton.govt.nz

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I support flexibility at work. While it suits me to send this email now, I don't expect a response outside of your own working hours.

From: Rates Enquiry <Rates@hcc.govt.nz>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2024 12:45 PM
To: [Official Information](#)
Cc: [Official Information](#) <officialinformation@hcc.govt.nz>
Subject: Re: Hamilton City Council Rates Invoice for Rates# 40056

H [Official Information](#)

Thank you for your email.

I have CC'd this to our Official Information team to determine if we can provide this information as a request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA).

Please be advised that this does not affect your legal obligation to pay rates (see [s60 LGRA](#)).

A 10% penalty may be applied to any balance of your rates which remains unpaid after the due date.
Instalment 1 is due on 5 September 2024.

Regards,

Andrew Judson
Rates Manager | Finance

DD: [Official Information](#) | Email: Andrew.Judson@hcc.govt.nz



Hamilton City Council | 260 Anglesea St | Hamilton 3240 | www.hamilton.govt.nz

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2024 8:20 PM
To: Rates Enquiry <Rates@hcc.govt.nz>
Subject: [SUSPICIOUS MESSAGE] Re: Hamilton City Council Rates Invoice for Rates# 40056

This Message contains suspicious characteristics and has originated outside your organization.

Hi there

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Thank you for your help,

[REDACTED]

On Wed, Aug 7, 2024 at 4:18 PM Hamilton City Council <rates@hcc.govt.nz> wrote:



Kia ora,

Attached is your quarterly Hamilton rates invoice.

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Amount due	\$934.27
Date due	5 September 2024

Changed address?

Please let us know if your postal address has changed. Not everything from Council is emailed and we want to make sure you don't miss anything important.

Rates for 2024/25

This invoice is your first of the new financial year and under the 2024-34 Long-Term Plan. As you'll see, rates have unfortunately had to increase to meet the financial challenges the city is facing.

Council and Hamilton are not alone in this situation – rates are increasing by similar levels in cities and towns around the country.

Read more to find out why rates have had to increase, payment options available, and rates relief.

Why rates have had to increase

The business of local government is costing more to deliver

Our city is facing cost increases outside Council's control, such as interest rates, inflation, and compliance demands from central government. And being a growing city means there's more for Council to deliver. We need to balance our financial situation with investing to grow our city well and deliver existing services.

We've cut costs

We've found a lot of savings by reducing our staff costs and making cuts to our capital programme. You will continue to receive what you're currently used to – such as keeping library and pool opening hours, gardens maintained, the city tidy, and the current kerbside residential rubbish and recycling collection schedule.

The city needs to balance its books

Previously, Hamilton's rates were not enough to cover all the costs of running our growing city, and the shortfall was being covered by debt. Borrowing money to fund operating expenses is not a good use of debt. That's why the city needs to balance its books (everyday costs met by everyday revenue) and start to achieve annual surpluses to service debt. Learn more at hamilton.govt.nz/futurehamilton.

Ways to pay

An easier and more flexible way to pay your rates is also coming soon – you'll be able to set and forget, with flexible options and text reminders. You can find out more about the different ways to pay rates at hamilton.govt.nz/payrates.

Rates rebates

Low-income homeowners who were paying rates for the home in which they were living on 1 July 2024 could be eligible for a **Government rates rebate** of up to **\$790**. Click [here](#) for more information and to download an application form.

We are also one of only a few councils in New Zealand to offer an **additional council rates rebate** on top of the nationwide scheme. If you are eligible for the Government rates rebate and meet additional criteria, you could receive an extra rebate of up to **\$788**. Contact us for a chat to see if you're eligible on 07 838 6688.

If you qualified for a rates rebate in the last year, we will be mailing out the forms for the new year shortly.

What your rates pay for

Click [here](#) to learn more about how your rates are calculated and what they pay for.

Hamilton City Council Rates Team

Phone: 07 838 6688 | Email: rates@hcc.govt.nz

