***Kāpiti Coast Grey Power’s purpose is to advance, support and protect the welfare and wellbeing of people aged 50+ in the Kāpiti Coast district.***

***As an advocacy organisation with a membership of 2,400, we directly represent some 2,200 households– and indirectly the 25,000 residents who are over the age of 50 – that’s 47 percent of the Kāpiti Coast District Council’s population of 55,000.***

***Our activities are directed and delivered by an active team of volunteers who are committed to the organisation’s purpose and success.***

OUR POSITION

Kāpiti Coast Grey Power (KCGP) notes Greater Wellington Regional Council’s (GW) Chair Daran Ponter saying GW’s next Long Term Plan will balance maintaining and improving services while keeping rates affordable despite rising borrowing costs, insurance and inflation. (Source: G*W Media Release 6 December* 2023).

KCGP submits that any increase to the rates should be no greater than the rate of inflation. New Zealand's consumer price index increased 4.7 percent in the 12 months to the December 2023 quarter, according to figures released by Stats NZ.

OUR SUBMISSION

Kāpiti Coast Grey Power submits that GW has a responsibility to its entire community to contain its costs to those of the consumer price index.

Our examination of a typical Kāpiti Coast household’s rates shows an increase since from the 2019-20 year to the current financial year of some 30%.

Our reading of GW’s media release is that GW is considering adding another 10% on top.

Increases in council rates impact not only property owners but those renting as well as the businesses that employ our community.

There is a frenzy of all parties (including Governments) putting up fees and charges.

Insurances, borrowings, prices of foodstuffs and of materials have all gone up for every household. KCGP is told of businesses facing 20% costs on materials.

It’s an ongoing spiral where these increased costs are dumped on individuals facing exactly the same financial pressures as GW faces … and are expected to make the budgetary savings.

Many Kāpiti residents, especially those on fixed incomes, cannot afford these increases and are going through the painful exercise of saving money. Sometimes that means going without meals or relying on the Food Bank, not turning on the electricity, not going to medical practitioners, dipping into KiwiSaver accounts and replacing clothing at the Op Shops.

The average New Zealand household will have to find an extra $70 a week in 2024 just to cover their costs, ASB economists say (Source: Stuff Dec 07 2023).

We submit that GW should also take into account the cumulative rate increase effects of constituent council’s in the region.

Kāpiti Coast District Council is considering a 12% increase in its rates. (KCGP is suggesting that Council also limits any rates increase to CPI)

Of interest to GW, the *Kāpiti Observer* reports:

*“The Kāpiti Coast is feeling the financial pain alongside its regional neighbours: Wellington City ratepayers are warned of “unprecedented” rates rises even with $170m of cuts to upgrades of Civic Square and proposals to sell $278m of airport shares.*

*“Hutt City’s rates rise could go as high as 19.9%; Upper Hutt requested a one-year extension to its long-term plan because of uncertainties over water and transport.”*

We note, for example, that GW’s staffing levels have increased from 499 in 2019 to 678 in 2023 (Source: GW annual reports). KCGP believes it’s time to re-examine outputs against achievements of such an additional workforce against its negative effects on our community, particularly in light of a significant proposed increase in rates.

It’s time to work smarter to contain costs in the best interests of those who struggle to pay those.

**We urge Greater Wellington Regional Council to go further and set its 2024-25rates at no greater than CPI.**