PREAMBLE

***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 2200 households– and indirectly the 25,000 residents who are over the age of 50 – that’s 47 per cent 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) is concerned at reports that Council is considering increasing its rates by an average of 12% for the financial year 2024-25 (Source: *Kāpiti Observer* 23 November 2023).

We submit that any increase to the rates should be no greater than the rate of inflation. New Zealand's consumers 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 Council has a responsibility to its entire community to contain its costs to those of the consumer price index.

Our examination of a typical household rate shows an increase since from the 2019-20 year to the current financial year of some 30%.

Now Council is considering adding another 12% on top.

And that figure is made worse in that:

* Council does not include the costs of rubbish removal – providers have increased their fees by 30%over the three years, and
* Wellington Regional Council (whose rate demand is included in the Kāpiti bills) has foreshadowed it will seek an increase. (KCGP is suggesting it also limits any increase to CPI)
* No announcement appears to have been made regarding the water rate.

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 Council and are expected to make the budgetary savings.

Many Kāpiti residents, especially those on fixed incomes, cannot afford the increases and are going through the painful exercise of where to pare back. Sometimes that means going without meals or relying on the Food Bank, not turning on the electricity, dipping into KiwiSaver accounts for daily needs 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).

The *Kāpiti Observer* reports:

*“…. a wishlist of items from councillors and community board members included upgrades to the Raumati Swimming Pool, building glamping huts to support local ecotourism and building an all-of-government multipurpose facility.*

*Officials told councillors at public briefings throughout late October and early this month that not all of their budget bids made the final cut, which would have cost closer to $5m.”*

*They discarded items including 27 new staff positions and more economic development initiatives.”*

KCGP submits that now is not the time for such dreams.

We fully support the need to maintain and upgrade vital infrastructure. However, in the current economic climate, councillors and community boards should be examining – and implementing – ways for Council to work smarter and contain our rates.

One example is an issue close to KCGP’s heart – Age Friendly policy. On 9th October Council adopted an “age friendly approach” after TWO YEARS of consultation …. And the result of that was “The first actions under the age-friendly approach will be to establish a cross-sector working group.”

Just get on with it.

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