

OIR: 2223/431

17 January 2023

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Request for Information under the Local Government and Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) (the LGOIMA)

Thank you for your email of 9 December 2022 requesting the following information:

How is your council saving money?

- 1. Formed in 2013, the New Zealand Taxpayers' Union, along with our sister group, the Auckland Ratepayers' Alliance, is a politically independent advocacy group campaigning for lower taxes, less waste, and more accountability. Our 200,000 subscribed members and supporters have a wide range of political views but are united by a belief that public money should be used wisely.**
- 2. The Taxpayers' Union is currently compiling a list of policy initiatives and cost-saving measures that local governments across New Zealand have taken to ease the burden on ratepayers. In 2018, we released a report titled '102 Ways to Save Money in Local Government', and we are planning to release an updated version for 2023.**
- 3. We invite you to contribute to this list by informing us of any actions, large or small, that your council has taken to save money or reduce costs by making your council more efficient and delivering services in a different way. We would be grateful if you could include an estimate of how much money each of these initiatives has saved. We would also be keen to know of any future plans you have to save money for ratepayers.**
- 4. This is an opportunity to demonstrate to your ratepayers and other councils that you are responsible managers of their money and demonstrate best practice to other councils across the country.**
- 5. Any councils that contribute will be featured in our report and their policy initiatives showcased as examples from which present and future councillors can learn.**
- 6. By contributing, your council will also be helping to develop a useful resource to reduce waste in local governments throughout the country, leading to a more prosperous New Zealand.**

To guide our mahi/work and ensure we manage our budget and ratepayers' money effectively and efficiently, Kāpiti Coast District Council works to detailed plans. Our [Long-term Plan](#) sets our direction, our financial and infrastructure strategies and our budget for the next 20 years. You can read more at www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/your-council/delivering-for-kapiti.

We are consistently identified as having the second lowest costs for our service delivery of all the 67 territorial authorities in the country. We are always looking for ways to be more cost-effective and have implemented a number of policies and operational initiatives that provide our communities and ratepayers with efficiencies. Some of these include:

- a) Upgrading air blowers in a wastewater treatment plant to reduce power consumption.
- b) When renewing playground equipment, we undertake any required works on surrounding footpaths at the same time. This ensures we can maximise the value and efficiency of these contracts and minimise disruption.
- c) Initiating good consultation processes with the residents when replacing playground equipment have also led to a more targeted procurement process, saving both time and money.
- d) Introducing 'no mow' areas and areas where we can reduce the number of times we mow/cut the grass. As we manage over 500 hectares of parks and reserves, this is a significant saver of both time and fuel costs.
- e) Using Hybrid mowing equipment. While more costly up front to purchase, over the lifetime of the machine, it provides savings along with improving carbon footprint.
- f) We will be trialling 'warm' season grass species that while requiring more work to establish into a sports field, over time will require less water and maintenance.
- g) Investing in [electric vehicles](#), transitioning most [streetlights to energy-efficient LED lights](#) and supporting Energise Ōtaki solar farm which provides power and resilience to the town's wastewater treatment plant.
- h) Creating a paperless environment including:
 - ongoing encouragement of rates payments by direct debits, which also qualifies for remission of penalties (under rates penalty remission policy)
 - encouraging invoices/communications sent by email instead of post with a quarterly prize draw of up to \$500 if receiving invoices by email and paying by direct debit
 - working to change existing paper-based forms to online forms that can be completed on our website or sent in electronically; and
 - changing paper-based accounts payable to electronic invoices based as well as workflow built in for more effective and efficient payment processes.
- i) Reviewing and changing suppliers of swimming pool consumables to be more cost effective.
- j) Efficiencies gained by upgraded swimming pool facility management software.
- k) Implementing a more structured swimming pool plant maintenance plan to be more efficient in managing pool plant maintenance.
- l) Reducing swimming pool hours based on pool usage to reduce unnecessary operational costs.
- m) Continually monitoring attendance KPIs for swimming pool classes to ensure value for money.
- n) Reducing rates for 2022/23 by re-scoping and value engineering some planned capital works due to significantly increased construction costs.
- o) Reducing rates for 2022/23 by re-distributing an accumulated closed water account surplus and adjusted depreciation funding resulted from the three waters reform.
- p) Developing a draft workforce strategy which will be aligned with work prioritisation.
- q) Commencing a review of the Council's insurance portfolio and exploring alternative risk transfer options.

- r) Upgrading our 118 older persons housing portfolio to meet Healthy Homes standards and other improved efficiencies which will save maintenance costs over the lifetime of building.

As we did not treat these initiatives as specific projects, we are unable to provide cost saving estimates and some may not have directly contributed cost savings, but increased efficiencies or delivered better services to our communities and ratepayers.

We review levels of service for activities as part of our long-term plan process which may identify further opportunities for savings. We will also be factoring in implications of central government reforms (Three Waters, Resource Management and Future for Local Government) when recommendations are confirmed.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark de Haast', written in a cursive style.

Mark de Haast

Group Manager Corporate Services

Te Kaiwhakahaere Rōpū Ratonga Tōpū