



Media Release
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Council to consider rates reduction and assistance plan

Selwyn District Council will consider options for a lower rates increase or a rates freeze for the next financial year, and will develop a rates payment assistance package.

The Council yesterday [Wednesday 8 April] agreed to consider changes to its Annual Plan Consultation Document when it meets next week. If endorsed, the revised plan will be released for public consultation later this month.

Consultation was scheduled to begin on 3 April, but was deferred so the Council could consider the impacts of COVID-19 on the community and review its priorities and rating requirements.

The Consultation Document originally proposed an average 3.5% rate increase, in line with the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan, but the Council will now seek public feedback on options to reduce this.

Options could include a rates freeze, with 2020/21 rates held at the same level as the current year, or an increase somewhere between 0% and 3.5%, depending on savings that can be identified.

Selwyn mayor Sam Broughton says the Council is very mindful of the disruptive effect the pandemic is having on the Selwyn community and economy.

"It's appropriate for us to take another look at our plans and proposals for the coming year," he says. "In light of the pandemic, our focus will change and some of the projects we previously saw as priorities will now be less important.

"We also know that COVID-19 is having a huge impact on households and businesses throughout our district, and we know that many will be facing significant difficulties for some time," he says.

"It's important that we hear from the community on what level of rates increase is acceptable – keeping in mind that any reductions now may result in catch-up increases in future years."

The revised Consultation Document would also indicate that capital works on the Rolleston Town Centre retail and hospitality development would be held over for consideration as part of the Council's Long-Term Plan 2021-2031.

The Council will also develop a package of rates assistance measures to help people and businesses facing rates payment challenges. This may include reduced

penalties for late payment, and an option for extended payments. Other options including rates postponement may also be explored in the future.

“As people are struggling it’s important for us to do what we can to help,” Mayor Broughton says.

“While we need rates income to continue providing essential services and infrastructure, we also need to be compassionate in responding to people’s circumstances – that’s what we’re aiming to do with this package.”

ENDS

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