

Rates Postponement Policy			
Approved By	Council (Pending)		
Department	Finance		
Original Approval Date	29 June 2018	Review Approval Date	13 August 2020
Next Review Deadline	31 July 2023	Document ID	346038
Relevant Legislation	Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 Local Government Act 2002 Income Tax Act 2007		
NCC Documents Referenced	Published in the Long Term Plan 2018-2028 which was reviewed between March/April 2018 and adopted on 29-06-18 Reviewed and amended in response to COVID-19 Rating – Delegations under Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 Reviewed and amended in conjunction with a review of the Revenue & Financing Policy 2020		

Purpose

To enable Council to postpone the requirement to pay all or part of the rates on a Rating Unit under Section 87 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 where a rates postponement policy has been adopted and the conditions and criteria in the policy are met.

Policy

Postponement for Older Persons

Objective

The objective of this part of the policy is to assist ratepayers who are Older Persons with a fixed level of income to meet rates particularly, but not exclusively, resulting from increasing levels of rates.

Definition

Older Persons are those who are old enough to qualify to receive NZ Superannuation.

For the purpose of this provision, Financial Hardship is defined as the inability of a person, to reasonably meet the cost of goods, services and financial obligations that are considered necessary according to New Zealand standards.

Conditions and Criteria

Postponement will only apply to Older Persons on a fixed income.

Only Rating Units used solely for residential purposes will be eligible for consideration for rates postponement under this policy.

Only the person entered as the ratepayer, or their authorised agent, may make an application for rates postponement for Financial Hardship. The ratepayer must be the occupant and current owner of the Rating Unit which is the subject of the application. The person entered on the Council's rating information database as the 'ratepayer' must not own any other Rating Units or investment properties (whether in the district or elsewhere).

The ratepayer (or authorised agent) must make an application to Council on the prescribed form (copies can be obtained from the Council Office).

The Council will consider, on a case by case basis, all applications received that meet the criteria outlined under this section. The following factors will be considered – age, income source and level, annual rates payable, period of postponement, equity in the property owned, and the amount of rates postponed.

Authority to approve applications will be delegated by Council to the Director of Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer and Investment and Funding Manager.

Applicants seeking rates postponement will be encouraged to seek independent advice before formally accepting any offer for postponement made by the Council.

As a general rule postponement will not apply to the first \$500 per annum of the rate account after any rates rebate has been deducted.

Where the Council decides to postpone rates the ratepayer must first make acceptable arrangements (e.g. by setting up a system to meet agreed minimum regular payments) for payments required under the terms of the postponement approval for the current rating year, and future payment years.

Postponement will only apply on properties on which houses have been insured. Annual proof may be required that insurance has been maintained.

Where rates postponement is approved for a property with an outstanding mortgage, the mortgagee will be advised by Council that rates postponement has been granted by the Council.

Any postponed rates will be postponed until:

The death of the ratepayer(s); or

- Until the ratepayer(s) ceases to be either the owner or occupier of the Rating Unit; or
- Until a date specified by the Council.

The Council will charge an annual postponement fee. The annual postponement fee will cover Council's administrative costs including finance costs. The finance cost will be charged at the average return on investments rate for Council for that year.

All postponement fees payable (including finance costs) will be added to the amount of postponed rates annually and be paid at the time postponed rates are paid.

The policy will apply from the beginning of the rating year in which the application is made although the Council may consider backdating past the rating year in which the application is made depending on the circumstances.

The postponed rates, inclusive of any accumulated postponement fees, or any part thereof may be paid at any time. The applicant may elect to postpone the payment of a lesser sum than that which they would be entitled to have postponed pursuant to this policy.

Postponed rates will be registered as a statutory land charge on the Rating Unit title. This means that the Council will have first call on the proceeds of any revenue from the sale or lease of the Rating Unit. In addition to the annual fee and interest, Council will charge any other costs or one-off fees incurred in relation to registration of the postponement as part of the postponement.

This policy will not affect any rates postponement provisions approved prior to 1 July 2009, which will continue to apply in accordance with the conditions related to each case.

This policy does not apply to non-Older Person ratepayers experiencing financial hardship.

Council will assist in the referral of any other ratepayer on a fixed income facing long term financial hardship to the appropriate agency.

Postponement for Significant Extraordinary Circumstances

Objective

To provide a rates postponement to ratepayers experiencing financial hardship directly resulting from Significant Extraordinary Circumstances that affects their ability to pay rates.

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions will apply:

- **Significant Extraordinary Circumstances:** as defined by Council resolution. Significant Extraordinary Circumstances may be natural or economic in nature, and will identify the type and location of properties affected.
- **Financial Hardship:** for the purpose of this provision is defined as the inability of a person, after seeking recourse from Government benefits or applicable relief packages, to reasonably meet the cost of goods, services and financial obligations that are considered necessary according to New Zealand standards. In the case of a ratepayer who is not a natural person, it is the inability, after seeking recourse from Government benefits or applicable relief packages, to reasonably meet the cost of goods, services and financial obligations that are considered essential to the functioning of that entity according to New Zealand standards.
- **Small Business:** a business operated by a small business person, small partnership or close company as defined in section YA 1 of the Income Tax Act 2007.

Conditions and Criteria

This part of the policy will only apply to Rating Units used for residential purposes or by Small Businesses.

Once Significant Extraordinary Circumstances have been identified by Council, the criteria and application process (including an application form, if applicable), will be made available. Council may set a timeframe for the event. Council may review the criteria and/or timeframe of Significant Extraordinary Circumstances through subsequent resolutions.

Council resolution will include:

- a. that the resolution applies under the Rates Postponement Policy; and

- b. the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances triggering the policy (e.g. including, but not limited to, flood, pandemic, earthquake); and
- c. how the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances are expected to impact the community (e.g. hardship); and
- d. the types or location of properties effected by the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances; and
- e. timeframe for postponement in relation to the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances.

No application for postponement can be made under this policy unless Significant Extraordinary Circumstances have been identified by Council.

Any requests for rates postponement for Rating Units with a land value greater than \$1.5m will be decided upon at the discretion of Council and requests for rate postponement for Rating Units with a land value less than \$1.5m will be delegated to Council officers.

The ratepayer must demonstrate, to the Council's satisfaction that paying the rates would result in Financial Hardship.

The applicant must demonstrate to Council's satisfaction that the ratepayer has taken all necessary steps to claim any central government benefits or allowances the ratepayer is properly entitled to receive that would assist the ratepayer to meet their financial commitments. Evidence such as official correspondence must be provided with the application.

Council will consider applications where the same ratepayer is liable for rates for multiple Rating Units. In such instances, Council will look at the collective impact to the ratepayer.

Only the person/s entered as the ratepayer (in the case of a close company every director must sign the application form), or their authorised agent, may make an application for rates postponement for Significant Extraordinary Circumstances that resulted in Financial Hardship. However, where the ratepayer is not the owner of the Rating Unit, the owner must also provide written approval of the application.

The ratepayer must be the current ratepayer for the Rating Unit at the time Significant Extraordinary Circumstances are identified by Council.

Where the Council decides to postpone rates the ratepayer must make acceptable arrangements for payment of rates, for example by setting up a system for regular payments. Such arrangements will be based on the circumstances of each case.

Council may charge a fee on postponed rates for the period between the due date and the date they are paid. This fee is designed to cover Council's administrative and financial costs. The fees will be set as part of the Council resolution identifying Significant Extraordinary Circumstances.

Postponed rates will remain postponed until the earlier of:

- a. The ratepayer/s ceases to be the owner or occupier of the Rating Unit; or
- b. A date specified by Council in the Council resolution identifying Significant Extraordinary Circumstances.

Postponement for Special Circumstances

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates postponement for special and unforeseen circumstances, where it considers relief by way of rates postponement is justified in the circumstances.

Conditions and Criteria

Application for rates postponement must be made in writing by the ratepayer or their authorised agent.

Each circumstance will be considered by Council on a case by case basis. Where necessary, Council consideration and decision will be made in the Public Excluded part of a Council meeting.

The terms and conditions of postponement including any application of an annual fee will be decided by Council on a case by case basis.

The applicant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the application.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years.

DRAFT