

Policy:	Rates Postponement Policy
Department:	Corporate Services
Approved by:	Policy and Services Committee
Effective date:	8 July 2024
Next review date:	1 March 2027
Document Number:	D24/3502

1. Policy

The Stratford District Council will postpone all or part of the rates owed by a ratepayer in respect of rating units covered by this Rates Postponement Policy provided that the conditions within this policy have been met. During the rates postponement period, no late payment penalties will be applied.

Where a rating unit for which the Stratford District Council has granted a rates postponement is sold, leased, or otherwise disposed of, the rates postponement shall be terminated at the time of disposal. If the new ratepayer qualifies for a rates postponement under this policy, it should be up to that ratepayer to apply for a rates postponement.

Council may decide to postpone rates in full or a percentage of the annual liable rates however, no postponement will be granted on targeted rates for water supply, wastewater system or solid waste.

2. Postponement for Land Affected by Natural Disasters

The Stratford District Council will provide rates postponement of up to 100% for up to two years, to all ratepayers who meet the objectives, conditions, and criteria of this policy.

A Postponement for Natural Disaster Hardship Committee, comprising the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and the Chief Executive will be delegated the authority to assess a ratepayer's application for rates postponement.

Objective

The objective of this postponement policy is to assist ratepayers experiencing extreme financial hardship as a result of a natural disaster. A natural disaster is considered as including, but not necessarily limited to, flooding, earthquake damage or a storm.

Criteria

Council will consider, on a case by case basis, all applications received that meet its criteria.

1. Formal application must be made by the ratepayer or the ratepayer's authorised agent to rates@stratford.govt.nz.
2. Following acknowledgement of the application, full information as requested by the Postponement for Natural Disaster Hardship Committee must be provided.
3. For the rates to be postponed, the Council will require a statutory declaration containing the value of the ratepayer's property insurance and the value of encumbrances against the property, including mortgages and loans.

Conditions

When considering whether extreme financial circumstances exist, all of the ratepayer's personal circumstances will be relevant including the following factors:

- Nature of the natural disaster and the impact on the ratepayer's property.
- Financial position of the ratepayer.
- Business Plan for recovery of the landowner, if applicable.

Before approving an application, Council must be satisfied that the ratepayer is unlikely to have sufficient funds left over, after the payment of rates, for necessary health care, as well as making provision for normal day to day living expenses.

The policy will apply from the date in which the application is made although Council may consider backdating to the start of the rating year, or earlier depending on the circumstances and the date of the natural disaster event.

The postponed rates 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 Council will have first call on the proceeds of any revenue from the sale or lease of the rating unit.

The application for a postponement under this policy will be assessed by the Revenue Manager and Director – Corporate Services and submitted for approval to the Natural Disaster Hardship Committee.