



Rates public meeting-related questions and answers

1. When are the meetings being held?

- Greytown Town Centre, 2 November, 6pm
- Anzac Hall, Featherston, 8 November, 6pm
- Martinborough Town Hall, 11 November 6pm

2. Why is the Council holding the public meetings?

These meetings are being held to discuss the drivers of and options around this year's rates increase. A lot of information has already been released and although this helped many, there were members of our community who wanted more discussion. This is an opportunity for the Council to listen further to ratepayers and discuss with you what happens next. Issues that are not related to the rates will not be addressed at these meetings but there are other places and processes for those.

3. What information has been provided previously to explain the rates issue?

Information about the rates increase has been released widely on our website and social media, in mail to ratepayers, and newspaper advertisements. It appeared in:

- [Our Long Term Plan](#) – consultation and final document that detailed the costs required to deliver the necessary levels of service and what these services are
- Rates resolution to Council on 30 June which can be found on our [Rates page](#)
- [Quarterly newsletters](#) sent to every ratepayer July 2021 and September 2021
- Rates statements in July 2021
- [Media release](#) and social posts of 29 July
- [Rates fact sheet](#) published and promoted via social
- [Frequently asked questions](#) published on our website and promoted via social
- Full page print advertorial on 4 August 2021
- Full page print advertorial on 3 September 2021
- Printed copy of the above mailed to every ratepayer household plus emailed copy to those who have subscribed to emails.

Information on how families, who may be struggling to pay their rates, can get support has been part of all our communication, and especially in every rates statement and newsletter that is sent to every ratepayer.

4. What will the public meetings tell us ratepayers?

You will hear from the Chief Executive on the background of the rates increases over the past two years. You will also hear from the Mayor on what options were considered by Councillors at their [meeting of 27 October](#) to cut costs for ratepayers. You will also hear from some of our ratepayers who wish to share their experiences with the rates increase and who we hope will offer feedback and ideas on the options considered and the preferred position Councillors have landed on.

5. Will Councillors and Community Board members attend these meetings?

Councillors and community board members have been invited and have agreed to attend.

6. How long are the meetings?

We have allowed two (2) hours for each meeting. We will aim to have some flexibility, however, we will need to be reasonable.

7. Where can I find information on how to attend these meetings?

You can [register to attend at our website](#).

We are emailing everyone who has been confirmed for the meetings with relevant information, an agenda and some answers to common FAQs. This information will also be published on our website ahead of the meetings. Registrations for the Greytown meeting are closed; registration for the other meetings will close at noon two days beforehand.

8. Who is facilitating these meetings?

We have selected someone who is a professional, local yet independent. Andrew Freeman is a trained facilitator and mediator from Masterton.

9. Will we be advised if our attendance is confirmed or not?

Yes, an email will be sent to all who have registered and been accepted. If the meeting is not over-subscribed, everyone who registered will be confirmed. This appears to be the case so far.

10. Must we be masked?

Yes, when you enter and leave, and it is recommended that you wear it while seated. You will be socially distanced 1m apart.

11. Are we required to keep our masks on when seated?

As above. We are treating these meetings as an event with a workplace component for staff. Once seated, the public may remove their masks as they are sitting socially distanced, however, it is recommended you keep your masks on wherever possible please.

Should anyone get up to move about then they must put their masks on again. This includes when leaving or entering and using the bathroom facilities.

12. What about speaking rights? When a person registers and enters a question, do they automatically receive the right to speak at the meeting?

Registering or submitting a question is not an automatic entry to speak. We may not have the time available to allow all speakers, otherwise the meetings could overrun significantly.

We have allowed 2 hours for the meeting, with a small allowance for overruns. The format will allow a number of people to ask questions and respond to the information that is being shared for around an hour.

The answers to questions asked at the meeting or emailed to us directly will be published with answers on our website.

13. What if people register but don't share a question beforehand with Council then want to speak at the meeting?

The format allows for questions to be asked and statements to be made. Where families are experiencing hardship paying rates, then we strongly recommend they contact us at their earliest opportunity so we may discuss the support options available to them.

Speaking about individual situations at a public meeting is not the best way of seeking help as we are restricted to giving very generalised answers.

14. Can I just show up on the night, without registering?

Covid restrictions mean there are limits to the number of people we can let in. If the venue is not full, we will let people come in on the night, but you would have to be masked and register on the spot.

If registration on our website has closed (as it will two days before the meeting) please email us at 2021rates@swdc.govt.nz with your details and the venue you want to attend, and we will manually register you and send you meeting-related information.

15. Can the people who have already registered now be confirmed that they can attend?

There is some misunderstanding that people will be pushed aside if a ballot is needed. That is not the case. A ballot will only happen should the registrations exceed capacity. At this stage the venues are around half-filled and it does not appear there is likely to be an issue. A ballot for over-subscription is a fair method to manage attendance in oversubscribed situations.

Attendance will be confirmed the day before each meeting, once we have closed off registration. Every effort will be made to accommodate all who have registered.

16. If the venues are currently not full why can't those who have already registered be confirmed?

It is planned to confirm all who have registered that they may attend their chosen meeting two days before the meeting. This ensures we have the most up-to-date registration data to base our confirmation on.