

RATES AND CHARGES 2020-21

As a response to COVID-19 economic impacts, the State Government announced that wherever possible, rates fees and charges be pegged at 2019/20 levels. Minister Templeman issued a Ministerial Order requesting all Local Governments to aim for NIL increases and to adopt COVID Hardship Policy. The Shire of Halls Creek was able to achieve this, and therefore rates and fees and charges for 2020/21 follow closely to that set in 2019/20.

Differential Rates

To avoid increases in rates levied, the rate differentials (rate applied to each dollar value of property value) have been kept at the same level as last year. The exception being Rural/Pastoral properties, who had a significant valuation increase in 2020. This is offset by reducing the Rate in the Dollar applied down to a point where rates on Rural/Pastoral will remain very similar to last year, in line with a Ministerial Order.

Objects and Reasons

The object for the Shire's rating structure is to raise sufficient revenue to meet the shortfall between the Shire's planned expenditures and the income derived from all sources for the year.

The imposition of differential rates for the various categories e.g. urban commercial & residential, pastoral, mining, prospecting and exploration is undertaken as a means of making rating fairer, whilst considering the potential impact and the cost of such activities on the Shire. Each has its own environmental, regulatory and road and infrastructure requirements throughout the Shire, particularly and most are not fully funded by other sources.

Differential rating systems allow the revenue streams to more represent the cost associated with each category. Also, differential rates can be used to encourage activity in a sector. As an example, lower than average rates on town improved properties and high rates on town vacant properties is to encourage growth and development within a town. The Shire considers all these aspects in establishing its differential rating strategy.

The minimum rate reflects the average cost per property incurred by the Shire to provide non-exclusive services (including parks, garden, recreation areas and street and town maintenance), giving consideration to the objectives and reasons aforementioned.

Refuse Removal Charges

The Shire has imposed an annual charge of \$570.00 per bin for the collection of a MGB ("wheelie bin") from domestic premises. This is included on the annual rate notice. This amount is charged for each bin at each property.

Non-domestic collections will be charged at a "per bin per collection" rate of \$6.60. GST is applicable for non-domestic collections and as such, the charging of non-domestic collections will be done on a monthly basis by invoice.

Television and Re-Broadcasting

A \$10.00 service charge per designated property within the Halls Creek Townsite will be continued into 2020-21. The income from this charge will be used to cover part of the cost of operations for television and radio re-broadcasting in the town of Halls Creek.

Payment of Rates and Charges

Please quote Assessment number on all correspondence.

Rates and charges are due and payable in full by the due date as shown on the front of the rate notice.

Alternatively, Ratepayers can elect to pay by four installments.

The four-installment option is only available if the first installment is paid by the due date shown on the front of the rate notice AND any/all arrears from the previous financial year (including all accrued penalty interest) are included in the first installment payment.

Should the first installment be received after the due date and/or the arrears are not paid in full of that payment, the option to pay by four installments is revoked and the right to pay by four installments is forfeited. The full amount becomes due and payable immediately.

Ratepayers should ensure they have allowed adequate postal time for payments remitted through the mail. The Shire of Halls Creek deems the payment date as the date the payment arrives at the Shire, and not the date shown on the remittance sent by the ratepayer. It is best to allow at least 5 days postage for payments sent from outside of the Halls Creek Shire.

Administration Fee and Interest Installments

Where a ratepayer elects to pay by four installments, an administration fee and administration interest is applied to the rate.

The administration fee is \$60.00 (\$20.00 per installment reminder notice issued). **In accordance with Ministerial Order, no Administration interest applies this year.**

An installment reminder will be issued at least one calendar month before the due date of the respective installment.

Interim Rates

The Shire may be required to issue interim rates during the course of the financial year. The main reasons for this are:

- Subdivision or amalgamation of land;
- An error in the valuation;
- Completion of a new building;
- Additions to existing buildings; and
- Demolition of improvements.

Sometimes the reason is simply that the annual rate notice was issued on an incorrect or out of date valuation. When the latest valuation has been received from the Valuer General, Shire is required to reassess the rates for the current year, and in some cases for a previous year.

Late Payment Penalty Interest

Penalty interest of 8% per annum (set by COVID Hardship Policy), calculated daily, will accrue on:

- Any amount which remains unpaid after the due date (unless the option to pay by four installments has been taken);
- On any installment, other than the first, that is not paid by the due date.

Penalty interest is applied daily, and accrues from the date the rates and charges are due until the date the rates and charges are paid in full.

Special Payment Arrangements and COVID Hardship Policy

If you are experiencing financial difficulty and are unable to pay the rates and charges in full by the due date or by the four-installment option, you MUST contact the Shire of Halls Creek prior to the due date to discuss alternative payment arrangements. There are many options for you to consider so early contact is essential.

Legal Recovery of Unpaid Rates and Charges

The due date for payment, either in full or by four installments, is clearly shown on the rate notice.

Prior year Rates and Charges that remain unpaid after this date can be recovered by collection agent and/or legal action, and current year rates are affected by the COVID Hardship Policy. Again, early contact could reduce stresses and hardship, discuss your circumstances with us.

Emergency Services Levy

The Emergency Services Levy (ESL) is a compulsory charge by the State Government for all property owners. The ESL is collected by the Shire on behalf of Dept. of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), and is remitted to DFES. The ESL provides the majority of funding required for career and volunteer Fire & Emergency Services brigades, DFES multi-function brigades/units, Bush Fire Brigades and State Emergency Service units.

Penalty interest of 8% per annum, calculated daily, is applied to unpaid ESL in the same manner that it is applied to rates and charges.

The Shire is also legally obliged to recover ESL in the same manner of recovery for unpaid rates and charges.

Pensioners and Senior Card Holders

A rebate under the Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferrals) Act 1992 of up to 50% on general (land) rates (to a maximum of \$750) and the ESL may be available to eligible Pensioners and Seniors Card holders. An option to defer general (land) rates and the ESL may also be an option.

To be an eligible pensioner: you must hold a current pension concession card or a state concession card; OR you must hold both a seniors card issued by the Office of Seniors Interests AND a Commonwealth Seniors Card.

To be an eligible senior: you must hold a Seniors Card that has been issued by the Office of Seniors Interests.

Both eligible pensioners and eligible seniors must also own and occupy their property at 01 July 2020, and those who own their property at 01 July 2020 and become eligible after this date may be entitled to a pro-rata rebate.

Change of Ownership

Under the Local Government Act, when a person (whether as principal or agent) sells or disposes of land, the owner/agent must advise Council in writing within 21 days of the change in ownership, giving full details of the purchaser.

Rates and charges are a charge on the land and not the owner, therefore liability for ALL unpaid rates and charges at the time of property transfer is legally transferred to the new landowner.

This includes freehold lots, crown leases, rural and pastoral leases, and all mining tenements (eg prospecting, exploration and mining).

The onus is on the purchaser to ensure that ALL rates and charges are paid in full on a ratable property prior to settlement taking place. A written statement of rates and charges should be obtained from the Shire, prior to settlement.

Change of Address

Please advise Council promptly, in writing, of any change in your address. There is an obligation for the property owners to ensure that Council has the correct address for service of notices.

Objection to Valuation

A property owner may lodge an objection against the valuation of a ratable property within 60 days of the date of issue of the 2020-21 Rate Notice. Objections must be made in writing and lodged directly with the Valuer General, PO Box 2222 Midland WA 6936. Please contact the Shire Office if you require more information.

Please note: Rates and Charges must be paid by the due date, irrespective of if an objection is lodged. Any reduction in rates as a result of a successful objection will be refunded.

Objections to the Rate book & Change of Ownership

A property owner can object to entries in the Shire's rate book, relating to the ownership or ratable status of a property. Speak to Shire staff.

Rates Exemption

The Shire requires organisations seeking exemption from rates in accordance with section 6.26 of the Local Government Act 1995 to make an application on the required Form. Rates and charges must still be paid by the due date irrespective of any exemption application lodged. Any reduction in rates and charges due to a successful application will be refunded.



Shire of Halls Creek Budget 2020-21

Annual Budget presented and adopted by Council at Ordinary meeting on Thursday 20 August 2020. COVID-19 delayed Budget until impacts known;

- Rates kept at same level from 2019-20
- Valuation increases for pastoral not used
- Minimum rates remain as 2019-20
- Rubbish rates unchanged from 2019-20
- COVID Hardship Policy adopted
- Interest on balances changed.

The delay allowed Shire to accurately predict the carried forward position. State and Federal assistance given relating to COVID-19 stimulus projects. Federal Government made early payments for Financial Assistance Grants (FAGS) and provided an additional payment for COVID-19 assistance (\$550k). These payments were essential information in the carried forward position.

Budget predicts a major downturn in fees and charges paid to Shire as a general downturn in the economy occurs. Shire would normally receive \$1.4m and in this year the expected yield is likely to be as low as \$500k.

Shire has adopted a COVID-19 Hardship policy which relates to the payment of rates and service charges, acknowledging that many ratepayers will also be experiencing significant downturn in business and family income. The policy is available on the Shire website.

Road construction remains the major focus of the Shire for 2020-21. Our biggest program is in association with the Main Roads WA on Duncan Gordon Road.

Strategically Shire remains focused on main elements;

- Expansion of the local economy
- Retention of contract funds in the local economy
- Expanding local employment and training
- Improved service delivery on a wider range of services
- Focusing on service gaps and alternate options

This results in a focus on;

- Local housing and land available for housing, commercial and light industrial
- Maximising grants received (\$1.4m 2019)
- Improving law and order – youth engagement night officers (8) day officers (4)
- Shire jobs road works crew (11)
- Reduced cost of accounting and administration
- Improved services in youth and Post Office

Road Works Program

Road work grants, stimulus and MRWA programs will see as the biggest ever program conducted by the Shire.

Duncan Gordon Road project – in conjunction with MRWA this three-year program is in year one with the Gordon Road and Sturt Creek crossing as the focus (\$10m).



Tanami Road – two years of regional road group grants to be spent with additional Aboriginal Access road grants (\$2m).

Balgo Road – Aboriginal Access grants (\$440K)

Carranya Road – (\$210k)

Lake Gregory Road – (\$265k)

Flood damage 2019-20 – Claim still outstanding with MRWA.



Capital Expenditure Program

Plant

Road sweeper (\$400k), Rubbish Truck (\$380k), Backhoe (\$125k), Road Camp utilities (\$200k).

Buildings

Dog pound (\$142k), Cemetery (\$75k), Aquatic Splash park (\$800k), Shade (\$25k), Gym (10k), Basketball Court improvements (\$60k).

Indigenous Training Group and Traineeships

COVID-19 delayed the plans start-up of 2020-21 road works training and traineeships. Indigenous training group commenced July 2020 with 10 trainees on 16-week course, assisted by TAFE North Regional. Traineeships will again start December 2020 (10 persons).



Olabud Doogethu

With Balgo (Wirrimanu), Billiluna (Mindibungu), Mulan, Ringer Soak (Kundat Djaru), Warmun (Turkey Creek) and Yiyili, Mardiwah Loop, Yardgee and Nicholson Block, in partnership with Social Reinvestment WA (SRWA), a coalition of 23 NGO's statewide Shire has become Western Australia's first Justice Reinvestment Site, Olabud Doogethu: Smart Justice in the Heart of the Kimberley. Olabud Doogethu in conjunction with SRWA will aim to expand services and connection with communities.

