

<p style="text-align: center;">Council Policy CP051 Financial Hardship Direct Debit Arrangement for Rates</p>			
Officer	Rates Coordinator	Owner	Manager Treasury and Finance
Review frequency	Triennial	Next review	June 2017
Registered with G&R	AA – 17 June 2014		
Council resolution number and date			
Mayor		Chief Executive Officer	

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to assist ratepayers experiencing financial hardship in managing their budget by allowing them to pay their rates through direct debit monthly, fortnightly or weekly with no administrative cost and no penalty interest.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all eligible ratepayers experiencing genuine financial hardship who elect to pay their rates in full through the direct debit payment system.

DEFINITIONS

City means the City of Greater Geraldton.

Council means the Council of the City of Greater Geraldton.

Councillor means a person who holds the office of Councillor on the Council.

Mayor means the Mayor elected by electors of the district of the City of Greater Geraldton.

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer of the City.

Employee means a person employed by the City under section 5.36 of the LGA.

Act or LGA means the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Record means any record of information however recorded and includes: anything on which there is writing, a map, plan, diagram or graph, a drawing, pictorial or graphic work, photograph; or anything from which images, sounds or writings can be reproduced.

Rate means charge imposed under sections 6.32 to 6.37 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Service Charge means charge imposed under section 6.38 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Administration Costs and penalty interest mean charges imposed under section 6.45 (3) and Part 5 r.67, r.68, r.70 and r. 71 of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*.

POLICY

1. The City recognises that ratepayers may, at times, experience financial hardship and have consequential difficulty in paying their accounts for rates and service charges. For ratepayers experiencing genuine financial difficulties, the City is committed to providing mechanisms to support and assist those ratepayers in meeting their legal commitments.
2. This payment program will assist such ratepayers by allowing them to pay their rates and service charges by equal instalments through a Special Direct Debit Payment Arrangement Program.

3. To be considered eligible for this program, ratepayers must provide information to the City to demonstrate genuine financial hardship and must provide the City with written advice on capacity to pay, provided by a recognised financial counsellor, which may include advice from recognised free financial counselling services provider.
4. Eligible ratepayers who elect to and satisfactorily pay their rates by instalments via direct debit payment system will incur no administration charge and no interest. To assist, the City will also absorb the costs to it of bank transaction fees associated with the direct debit payments.

Policy Principles

5. Eligible Ratepayers who seek to pay their rates and service charges under this Special Arrangement Program must register and apply to obtain an Agreement with the City.
6. Direct Debits can only be deducted from the ratepayer's savings, cheque and any other accounts as may be allowed by the ratepayer's financial institutions.
7. No City administration costs will be charged and no penalty interest will be added unless the arrangement is cancelled by the ratepayer, in which case, the total amount of rates must be paid in accordance with the existing ordinary terms and as such City administration costs and penalty interest will apply.
8. Where there are insufficient cleared funds in the nominated account, a dishonoured fee will apply per transaction.
9. In case the property is sold the total amount of rates must be paid or settled along with the sale otherwise, administration costs or penalty interest may apply.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Rates Coordinator is responsible for implementing this policy.

WORKPLACE INFORMATION/REFERENCES

The Local Government Act 1995

Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996