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Havelock North water crisis expected to cost Hastings District Council \$710,000

SIMON HENDERY/ FAIRFAX NZ

One of the Havelock North bores shut down following the water contamination crisis. Find a new water source for the town is likely to add to Hastings District Council's costs in the wake of the crisis.

Havelock North's water contamination crisis is expected to cost Hastings district ratepayers more than \$700,000.

An estimated 5200 of Havelock North's 14,000 residents succumbed to gastro illness last month after drinking contaminated water from the town's water supply, the responsibility of Hastings District Council.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council is investigating the source of the contamination and the Government has also announced an inquiry.

Hastings District Council had previously said it was too early to put a cost on the crisis but figures in a report prepared for next week's meeting of the council's finance and monitoring committee estimate it will be over \$700,000.

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The report, prepared by council finance staff, recommends councillors approve setting aside \$300,000 "to cover expected additional costs required due to the Havelock North water contamination incident".

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Early in the crisis the council set aside \$10,000 to support Havelock North businesses hit by the gastro outbreak.

Last week it announced it would commit a further \$100,000 to a business recovery fund, an amount that has been matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government.

Also last week, the council said it would not charge Havelock North ratepayers their usual three-monthly \$57 water rates bill for the current quarter.

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According to the finance committee report, the total cost to the council of the rates remission would be \$300,000.

On top of the total of \$710,000 in costs and lost revenue outlined in the report, the council is also likely to be forced to fork out more money for new water infrastructure for Havelock North over the next two years.

It has shut down the wells just outside the town that were being used to draw its water and had tested positive for contamination.

Havelock North water is now being pumped from the nearby Hastings supply – which comes from a different aquifer – but there are concerns that the additional demand from that source will not be sustainable, particularly over summer.

COUNCIL COSTS:

- * Havelock North water rates remission: \$300,000
- * Business recovery package: \$110,000

* Other costs: \$300,000

* Total: \$710,000

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