



2022 TRIENNIAL ELECTION

ELECTION PROTOCOLS FOR CANDIDATES

Context

1. Local government elections are held every three years. In 2022, voters will elect their new Council on Saturday 8 October. The period leading up to an election is a time of high interest for many including the media, members of the public and electoral candidates.
2. These protocols provide guidance for candidates in the pre-election period (the three months prior to election day).

Summary

3. Resources owned by the Council must only be used for Council purposes. The use of Council resources for election purposes is unacceptable. This includes Council-owned physical assets, software, social media channels and publications.
4. Council runs several social media accounts. These are Council resources and Council will remain politically neutral during the election. Candidates must comply with any social media guidelines at all times.
5. The current Mayor, Councillors and community board members will continue to have access to the information they need to do their job as an incumbent elected member during the pre-election period. Council officers will not provide assistance with electioneering activities to any candidate.

Protocols

6. The following protocols have general application at all times but are especially relevant in the three months before the local election (Friday 8 July – Saturday 8 October). As a candidate it is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these protocols.

Protocol 1: Continuation of Council business

Council operations continue during the pre-election period. Elected members continue to govern and make decisions during the pre-election period.

7. In the lead up to the election, the routine business of Council must continue. This means that elected members have a responsibility to govern and make decisions. Some examples of the routine business are:
 - implementing decisions in an adopted long-term plan or annual plan
 - meeting statutory requirements (e.g. reviewing-bylaws and policies)
 - preparing, adopting and publicly releasing reports or other documents that are statutory requirements (e.g. the pre-election report and annual report)
 - releasing factual information – especially where release regularly occurs during the pre-election period in other years (e.g. where information of a monitoring or statistical nature is regularly released in August, September and October).
8. The Mayor, Committee chairs or Council spokesperson on an issue may continue to make public statements on Council business as they would outside the pre-election period.
9. Council communications which quote incumbent members will be restricted during the pre-election period. This will help remove any perception that the Council is helping incumbents to promote their re-election prospects over other candidates.
10. Incumbent elected members must make a clear and transparent distinction between their activities as an elected member and their activities as a candidate.

Protocol 2: Use of Council resources

Local authorities must not promote, or be perceived to promote, the prospects of any candidate, especially a sitting member. Using Council resources for re-election of sitting members is unacceptable and potentially unlawful.

11. Council would be directly promoting a candidate's prospects if it allowed the use of Council resources¹ explicitly for campaign purposes. This includes all Council communications facilities (such as Council branding, stationery and postage, social media channels communications devices and Council email addresses).
12. If in doubt whether something is a Council provided resource, a good question to ask is whether the Council purchases or funds it. For example, a Council-funded radio slot would be regarded as a Council resource.

Protocol 3: Social media

Council's social media channels are Council resources and will remain politically neutral during the election. Candidates must follow any Council social media guidelines for candidates at all times, and not comment on Council's social media channels for electioneering.

13. This section sets out the Council's approach to social media in the pre-election period.
14. Advice on how to effectively and safely use social media during the election period is attached as Attachment 1 to this document.
15. Council's social media channels will remain neutral at all times. Council will promote elections and the importance of voting, but will not associate these posts with any individual candidates. Discussion and activity by candidates in the election period will not be permitted on the Council's social media channels. Council will remove candidate posts and activity on New Plymouth District Council social media channels.

¹ Council resources include, but are not limited to, Council-owned or -controlled property and other resources including the Council logo and branding, all Council marketing and communication channels (including social media), Council-supplied business cards, stationery, computers, email, mobile phones, photocopiers, cars, Council venues (other than those available for hire to the general public), Council funds, and Council's human resources.

16. During the pre-election period:

- Candidates may not post on the Council's social media channels.
- Council's social media channels must not be used by anyone for campaigning purposes. Council will remove any campaign-related material including posts related to nominations and candidacy of third parties.
- Council social media accounts will not follow any candidates. This may result in a candidate's account being unfollowed.
- Candidates may not reply to comments or posts on Council's social media channels. This includes encouraging people to like or follow your social media accounts.
- Candidates may share the Council's posts to their private social media channel(s) and then comment on the thread on their own social media channel. The candidate will then be responsible for managing the discussion and activity on their personal social media channels.

Protocol 4: Availability of information

17. Members of the public, including candidates, ~~are~~ can request information at any time. Council staff will consider any candidate requests under the requirements of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA).
18. Where the Council supplies a candidate with information that is not already in the public domain, the Council may consider any broader interest in the information. At its discretion, the Council may make this information available to all other candidates.



Attachment 1

Social Media Guidelines for Candidates

1. Many candidates use social media to create a presence during their election campaign. Candidates must comply with the following guidelines for social media use and presence related to campaigning:

Things to be aware of

2. Election advertising, using any media, including social media, must identify the person under whose authority they have been produced, as per sections 113-115 of the Local Electoral Act 2001. This means in your profile photo/bio, you must have a statement saying that all content/images on your social media channel are authorised by you or your agent. You must include the true name and contact details of the person under whose authority they have been produced. The contact details can be one or more of the following:
 - A residential or business address
 - An email address
 - A PO (post office) box number
 - A phone number
 - A link to a page on an internet site, if the page contains one or more of the contact details specified above.
3. The Council's social media accounts, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Neighbourly, are not permitted to be used as a communications channel by anyone (candidates or members of the public) for promotion, electioneering or campaigning.
4. The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored and any campaign related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
5. If Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed three months prior to the election date. This protocol is in line with the Local Electoral Act 2001.
6. Council will remove any social media post (whether positive or negative) referencing a candidate's nomination, intention to run for Council, or election campaign.
7. Candidates cannot reply to the Council's social media posts. Any posts that do this will be removed immediately.

8. Candidates may share the Council's posts to their private social media channel(s) and comment. It will then be their responsibility to manage the discussion and activity on their personal social media channels.
9. Candidates must not link their own social media accounts to the Council's social media accounts.
10. Candidates cannot rate, review, check-in or tag the Council's social media channels.
11. The Council's social media accounts will remain neutral. Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but will not associate these posts with any candidates.

Social media - some things all candidates can do

12. It's a good idea to encourage people to follow your social media accounts while campaigning, include it in any promotional material. It's a great way to engage with the public – you can ask questions, run polls, encourage people to register to vote and then actually vote! Remind them of important dates, etc.
13. Great images are important on social media – post pics from your campaign trail, or post videos of yourself explaining who you are and what you stand for. You may have people who are happy to be filmed sharing why they will be voting for you – seeing other members of their community may encourage people to vote.

Facebook

14. It's a good idea to have a public figure Facebook Page with a clear profile picture to help your election campaign. It's best to have a recent photo.
15. Set-aside budget for Facebook advertising to reach voters. You need to become authorised to run ads with political content. Facebook has helpful info (put Facebook advertising into the search facility on your Facebook page).
16. Facebook has a helpful information about how to engage your audience and build community.

Twitter

17. Create a Twitter account. New Zealanders can be very active on Twitter especially when it comes to political discussions. See what hashtags are trending for the election. Follow prominent locals, and if people follow you, follow them back.
18. Think of Twitter more like a newsfeed or forum to release information about everything you are doing.

19. Twitter is a great platform to get involved in conversation and engage the public in the issues you are passionate about. Let people know what you stand for/what you want to change, give people the chance to share their views and explain the reasons for the changes you want to make.

Neighbourly

20. Set up a personal profile on Neighbourly if you don't have one already and then you can add a special candidate pin to your profile picture so the community knows you are a candidate. On this platform you can speak directly to your ward and let the community get to know you and see what upsets them/what they care about. Neighbourly often runs special groups for local elections that you can be part of. Visit neighbourly.co.nz/help for more info.

Instagram

21. Instagram is all about photos. You can feature a single photo or a collage of photos that will show up on your follower's feeds. You want to drive engagement, not just reach. So, remember to focus on quality rather than quantity. Instagram is most successful when you tell personal stories and pictures that give the public greater insight into your campaign, rather than promotional images.
22. Stories are a great way to group photos into albums. You might use them to share behind the scenes, promote an event, or focus on a specific issue you care about. You can also customise your stories by adding music, text, emoji or even polls so you can make them more interactive and add a bit of your own personality.