



Election protocols for elected members

Updated for 2019 Local Government Election

Context

Local government elections are held every three years. In 2019, the final day to receive votes for the election will be on Saturday 12 October. The period leading up to an election is a time of high interest from the media, members of the public and electoral candidates.

As an incumbent elected member seeking re-election, you have two roles. You will continue to make the decisions of Hawke's Bay Regional Council as members of the Council, while at the same time campaigning for re-election as a candidate.

These protocols provide guidance for you to balance your dual role as elected members and candidates seeking re-election. For further guidance or for clarification, please contact Leeanne Hooper, Council's Electoral Officer.

Summary

1. If you are standing for re-election, you must clearly and transparently differentiate between activities conducted as an incumbent elected member, i.e. business-as-usual activities, and activities conducted while campaigning for re-election.
2. Resources owned by the Regional Council and made available to you should only be used for Council business-as-usual activities, and not for election purposes. This includes Council-owned computers and mobile phones, social media channels, email addresses and publications, including newsletters.
3. Regional Council-run social media accounts are considered Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. You must comply with our social media guidelines for candidates at all times.
4. You will continue to be provided with access to the information you need to do your job as a councillor.
5. These protocols have general application at all times, but are especially relevant now, in the lead-up to the 2019 local elections. It is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these guidelines.

Protocol 1: Continuation of Regional Council business

The normal business of the Regional Council continues during the pre-election period. Incumbents seeking re-election must balance and differentiate between these two roles.

Leading up to the election, elected members continue to have the right and responsibility to govern and to make decisions.

However, you should be mindful of an increased level of media and public scrutiny during this period and make a clear and transparent distinction between your activities as an elected member and your activities as a candidate.

Protocol 2: Use of Regional Council resources

A local authority must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a sitting member. The use of Regional Council resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable.

The Regional Council would be directly promoting a member's re-election prospects if it allows incumbent elected members to use Council resources¹ explicitly for campaign purposes. This includes all Council communications facilities, such as Council branding, stationery and postage, social media channels, email and communications devices.

Regional Council communications will be restricted during the pre-election period, to remove any perception that the Council is helping incumbents to promote their re-election prospects over other candidates.

Therefore:

- Regional Council resources must not be used for campaigning purposes (including for positions not at Hawke's Bay Regional Council). This includes Council-supplied computers, social media channels, and email addresses.
- Elected members' columns in Council publications and radio slots will be suspended.
- Access to Council resources for members to issue media releases will be limited to business-as-usual activities, and the Chief Executive will replace chairpersons' media releases setting out the Council's position on an issue.

Your Regional Council contact information will still be available, such as on the Council website or in the Annual Report, so your constituents can contact you about Council business. However, you should not use your Council-supplied email address or iPad for electioneering purposes. If someone contacts you regarding the election on either of these channels, you should reply from your personal email address or device.

Protocol 3: Social media

The Regional Council's social media channels are Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. Elected members seeking re-election must follow Council's social media guidelines for candidates at all times, and not comment on, share, or otherwise use Council social media channels for electioneering.

Council has produced a set of social media guidelines for candidates (Appendix 1), which must be complied with.

Council will promote elections and the importance of voting, but will not associate these posts with any candidates, and Council's social media channels will remain neutral at all times.

Please note that for the period between now and the 12 October 2019 election:

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, and Council venues (other than those available or for hire to the general public).

- The Regional Council’s social media channels must not be used by anyone for campaigning purposes. Any campaign-related material (including posts related to nominations and candidacy) will be removed.
- Council social media accounts will not follow any candidates.
- Candidates are not to reply to comments or posts on, rate, review, check-in or tag the Council’s social media channels.

Advice on how to effectively and safely use social media during the election period can be found in the social media guidelines for candidates (Appendix 1).

Protocol 4: Availability of information

Elected members will continue to have access to the information they need to discharge their roles as incumbents and their Regional Council contact information will still be publicly available. However, Council officers will not provide assistance with electioneering activities.

You will continue to be supported in your role as an incumbent elected member, however information requests should be clearly related to Regional Council business and not for re-election purposes.

Information requests for election purposes are welcome. These should be made to the Governance team and will be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act.

Where the Regional Council supplies information that is not already in the public domain to a candidate, the Council may consider any broader interest in this information, and at its discretion make this information available to all other candidates.

Protocol 5: Use of Chair’s resources

Regional Council resources provided for the Chairman’s use should not be used for any electioneering activities associated with any candidate.

If an incumbent Chair is seeking re-election a clear and transparent distinction will be made between that Chair’s business-as-usual activities and campaigning activities.

The incumbent Chair’s office will establish systems and protocols to ensure that any information or other requests from the public, media, other elected members or council employees during the pre-election period are identified as either business as usual or campaign related to ensure that these are kept separate and responded to appropriately.

Application of protocols

As an elected member seeking re-election, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that your behaviour falls within these guidelines.

If you are unsure as to whether a particular action or request is in breach of these protocols, you should seek advice from Leeanne Hooper (Electoral Officer, 833 8017) or Barb Mear (Deputy Electoral Officer, 833 8024) in the first instance.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council's Social Media Guidelines for Candidates

Candidates must comply with the following guidelines for social media use and presence related to campaigning.

Things to be aware of

- 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 a physical address in the authorisation statement.
- The Regional Council's social media accounts (listed below), 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. This also applies to all social media accounts owned by Council-controlled organisations.
- The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored and any campaign related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If the Regional Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed immediately. This protocol is in line with the Local Electoral Act 2001.
- Any social media post – positive or negative – made by any individual specifically relating to their own – or someone else's – nomination, intention to run for Council, or election campaign, will be removed immediately.
- Candidates cannot reply to the Council's social media posts or share with a comment encouraging people to like or follow their own social media accounts or any other electioneering tool. Any posts that do this will be removed immediately.
- Candidates must not link their own social media accounts (if they are used for campaigning purposes) to the Council's social media accounts.
- Candidates cannot rate, review, check-in or tag the Council's social media channels.
- The Council's social media accounts will remain neutral. Hawke's Bay Regional Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but will not associate these posts with any candidates.

Social media channel list

For the sake of clarity, our organisation's web and social media channels under control of HBRC (on 24 April 2019) are:

Council and CCO Social Media Channels	Council and CCO Websites
HBRC Facebook	www.hbrc.govt.nz
HBRC Instagram	www.hbemergency.govt.nz
HBRC Twitter	www.eastcoastlab.org.nz
Hawke's Bay Regional Council LinkedIn	www.capetocity.co.nz
Hawke's Bay Regional Council YouTube	www.poutiri.co.nz
HB Parks & Trails Facebook	www.biodiversityhb.org
HB Parks & Trails Instagram	www.hbcoast.co.nz
HB CDEM Facebook	www.hpuds.co.nz
HB CDEM Twitter	www.hbtrails.nz
East Coast LAB Facebook	
East Coast LAB Twitter	
Cape to City Facebook	
Poutiri Ao ō Tāne Facebook	

Some things you can do

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.

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

- 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 new photo.
- Set-aside budget for Facebook advertising to reach voters. You need to become authorised to run ads with political content and Facebook has helpful info on this.
- Facebook also has a helpful guide about using Facebook to engage with voters and build your online community.

Twitter

- Create a Twitter account. See what hashtags are trending for the election. Follow prominent community leaders, and if people follow you, follow them back.
- Think of Twitter more like a newsfeed or forum to release information about everything you are doing.
- 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

- 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 constituency 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

- 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.
- 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.