

Hawke's Bay Regional Council election protocols for elected members 2022

Context

Local government elections are held every three years. In 2022, the elections will be held on Saturday, 8 October. The period leading up to an election is a time of high interest from parties including 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 decisions as a member of the Council, while at the same time campaigning for re-election as a candidate.

These protocols, developed by Local Government New Zealand and Taituarā, 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 HBRC's Electoral Officer, Leeanne Hooper.

Summary

1. If you are standing for re-election, you should clearly and transparently differentiate between activities conducted as an incumbent elected member (business as usual activities) and activities conducted while campaigning for re-election.
2. Resources owned by the Council and made available to you should only be used for Council purposes. The use of Council resources for election purposes is inappropriate. This includes Council-owned computers and mobile phones, social media channels, email addresses and publications.
3. While undertaking Council and committee duties, you should not undertake electioneering activities. This includes wearing self-promoting clothing or accessories.
4. Council-run social media accounts are considered Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. All candidates must comply with the social media guidelines for candidates (provided following) at all times.
5. You will continue to have access to the information you need to do your job as a councillor, however Council officers will not provide assistance with electioneering activities.
6. These protocols have general application at all times, but are especially relevant in the pre-election period (the 3 months leading up to the local Election, being 8 July - 8 October). It is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these guidelines. It is not the role of Council staff to police your behaviour.

Protocol 1: Continuation of Council business

*The normal business of 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.

In the context of the recently released Taituarā guidelines for “Communications in the pre-election period”, it would be reasonable to require that elected members stop using Council-funded media slots, although common sense has to prevail. For example, an elected member invited to write a newspaper column or speak on a radio slot not funded by the council cannot reasonably be seen to be receiving an “electoral advantage at ratepayers’ expense”.

Similarly, whether a column in a council newsletter represents a form of electioneering needs to be judged on the nature of the content and how it is presented. Elected members’ roles do not stop three months before polling day - they should be able to fulfil their *business as usual* duties on behalf of the council up until polling day. There is no gap in an elected member’s three-year term.

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 Council resources

A local authority must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a sitting member.

The use of Council resources for re-election purposes is inappropriate.

Council would be directly promoting a member’s re-election prospects if it allowed 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, and communications devices).

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.

Your Council contact information will still be available (for example on the Council website or in the Annual Report) so your constituents can contact you about Council business. However, you should not be using your Council supplied email address for electioneering purposes. If someone contacts you regarding the election on either of these channels, you **should reply from your personal email address or mobile phone**.

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.

Protocol 3: Social media

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 use Council social media channels for electioneering.

Council has produced a set of social media guidelines for candidates. Advice on how to effectively and safely use social media during the election period is included in the Social media guidelines section of this document.

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 candidates.

Please note that for the period of the election:

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. This may result in your account being unfollowed.

You may not reply to comments or posts on Council's social media channels encouraging people to like or follow your social media accounts.

You may not rate, review, check-in or tag the Council's social media channels in your own posts or comments.

Protocol 4: Availability of information

Elected members will have access to the information they need to discharge their roles as incumbents and their Council contact information will still be publicly available.

You will continue to be supported in your role as an incumbent elected member, including by current Council staff. However, information requests should be clearly related to 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 1987.

Where the Council supplies information that is not already in the public domain to a candidate the Council will, to ensure against Council resources being used to give an electoral advantage to any candidate, make this information available to all other candidates.

Protocol 5: Use of Chair's resources

Council resources provided for the Chair'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. An incumbent Chair seeking re-election will establish a separate office, with separate staff, for any campaigning activities at their own expense.

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 so that they 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 your Electoral Officer (Leeanne Hooper) or Deputy Electoral Officer (Peter Martin) as soon as possible.

Online Guidelines for HBRC Candidates 2022

All candidates must comply with these election campaign guidelines for web and social media use, and presence. These guidelines are effective immediately (1 July 2022) until 24 hours after elections close (12pm, Sunday 9 October 2022). This guide applies specifically to the online tools used by Hawke's Bay Regional Council and its Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), referred to as "our organisations".

Social Media Guidelines for Candidates

Things to be aware of:

- Election advertising using any media including social media, must identify the person under whose authority adverts or posts have been produced – per sections 113-115 of the Local Electoral Act 2001. Your profile photo/ bio 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, postal or email address in the authorisation statement.
- The Regional Council's social media accounts (listed following) are not permitted to be used as a communications channel by anyone (candidates or members of the public) for promotion, electioneering or campaigning. The same applies to social media accounts owned by Council-controlled organisations.
- The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored. Any campaign-related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If the Regional Council already follows your public social media accounts, you will be unfollowed immediately. This aligns with the Local Electoral Act 2001.
- Any social media post – positive or negative – made by an 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. Posts that do this will be removed immediately.
- Candidates must not link their own social media accounts (if 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 remain neutral. Hawke's Bay Regional Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but not associate these posts with any candidates.

Some things you can do

It's a good idea to encourage people to follow your social media accounts while campaigning, and 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 images 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 information 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. 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 and 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. You can see what upsets them and what they care about. Neighbourly often runs special groups for local elections that you can be part of. Visit www.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 followers' 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.

Social media channel list

For the sake of clarity, the web and social media channels under HBRC's control (on 23 May 2022) 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	