



2025 TRIENNIAL ELECTION

ELECTION PROTOCOLS FOR CANDIDATES

Context

1. Local government elections happen every three years. In 2025, voters will choose their new Mayor, Council and Community Boards on Saturday 11 October. The months leading up to the election are a time of high interest for many including the media, the public, and candidates.
2. These protocols provide guidance for candidates during the pre-election period (the three months before election day).
3. Additional details, particularly around signage, donations, expenditure limits and other statutory requirements are available on the Council's website and in the Candidate Information Handbook.

Summary

4. Council business continues through the pre-election period. These protocols are provided to keep the candidates, the Council and the integrity of the election process safe.
5. Council resources must only be used for Council purposes, not for election campaigns. These resources include Council-owned physical assets, software, social media, and publications.
6. Council's social media accounts will remain neutral, and candidates must follow social media guidelines, avoiding the use of Council's channels for campaigning.
7. The current Mayor, Councillors, and community board members will continue to have access to the information they need to do their job during the pre-election period, but cannot use Council resources for electioneering.

Protocols

8. The following protocols have general application at all times but are especially relevant in the three months before the local election (Friday 11 July – Saturday 11 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 as usual during the pre-election period. Elected members must keep governing and making decisions.

9. In the lead up to the election, the routine business of Council will continue. Routine business includes:
 - implementing decisions in an adopted Long-term Plan or Annual Plan
 - meeting statutory requirements (e.g. reviewing bylaws and policies)
 - preparing, adopting and releasing necessary reports and documents or other documents like the pre-election report and annual report
 - releasing factual information – especially where there is a regular pattern of release in non-election periods such as monitoring or statistical information including quarterly reports.
10. In the pre-election period the Mayor and Council spokespersons can make public statements on Council business. However, Council will limit communications quoting incumbent members to avoid promoting re-election.
11. 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

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

12. Council would be directly promoting a candidate's prospects if it allowed the use of Council resources¹ for campaign purposes.
13. If you are unsure whether something is a Council resource, ask yourself whether the Council funds or purchases it.

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 addresses, 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 will remain politically neutral during the election.

14. This section sets out the Council's approach to social media in the pre-election period.
15. Candidates must follow any Council social media guidelines for candidates at all times, and not post or comment on Council's social media channels during the pre-election period
16. 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.
17. Council will remove candidate posts and activity on New Plymouth District Council social media channels.
18. 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.
19. Candidates can share Council posts on their private channels and comment there.



Protocol 4: Availability of information

20. Members of the public, including candidates, can request information at any time. Council staff will consider any requests from candidates under the requirements of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA).
21. When the Council provides a candidate with information that is not already public, it may consider if there is a broader interest and, at its discretion, make this information available to all candidates.



Attachment 1

Social Media Guidelines for Candidates

1. It is a good idea to encourage people to follow your social media accounts while campaigning. You can include links 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.
2. Many candidates use social media to create a presence during their election campaign.

Things to be aware of

3. 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.
4. 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
5. The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored, and any campaign-related or electioneering content will be removed immediately. Council will unfollow candidates' public social media accounts three months before the election.
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. Candidates cannot reply to the Council's social media posts. Any posts that do this will be removed immediately.
7. 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.
8. Candidates must not link their own social media accounts to the Council's social media accounts.
9. Candidates cannot rate, review, check-in or tag the Council's social media channels.