

Election protocols for Elected Members

Updated for the 2019 Local Election

Context

Local government elections are held every three years. In 2019, the elections will be held on Saturday 12 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 the decisions of South Wairarapa District Council as members of the Council, or Community Board 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 Barbara Gavan in the first instance, or Council's Electoral Officer, Warwick Lampp, 021 498 517 wlampp@electionz.com.

Summary

1. If you are standing for re-election, you must clearly and transparently differentiate between activities conducted as an incumbent elected member (e.g., business-as-usual activities) and activities conducted while campaigning for re-election.
2. The use of Council resources for election purposes is unacceptable. These include vehicles, offices, meeting rooms, email addresses, social media, and publications. An exception is made for technology devices such as mobile phones, laptops, and computers.
3. 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 have access to the information you need to do your job as an incumbent. Council officers will not provide assistance with electioneering activities.
5. These protocols have general application at all times, but are especially relevant in the three months before the local election (Friday 12 July – Saturday 12 October). It is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these guidelines.

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.

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 unacceptable.

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, 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.

Therefore, during the pre-election period:

- Council resources must not be used for campaigning purposes (including for positions not at South Wairarapa District Council). This includes Council-supplied computers, social media channels, email addresses, mobile phones and telephone numbers.
- Elected members' columns in Council publications will be suspended.
- Elected members will be required to comply with Council's social media guidelines for candidates in all aspects of their role.
- Support for writing speeches for elected members by SWDC staff or contractors will be restricted to SWDC supported activities or events.
- Access to Council resources for members to issue media releases will be limited to what is strictly necessary to communicate current Council business. Comments or quotations from the Mayor and chairpersons will continue to be used in media releases setting out the Council's position on an issue (for example, where a decision has been made at a committee meeting). Officers will comment on or issue media releases as required. Journalistic use of information that may raise the profile of a member will be discontinued.

Your Council contact information will still be available on the Council website so your constituents can contact you about Council business. However, other website information will be limited to photographs and Committee memberships. You should not be using your Council-supplied email address for electioneering purposes. If someone contacts you regarding the election, you should reply from your personal email address.

During the election period, election candidates generally may be invited to some Council events.

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), and Council funds.

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 comment on, share, or otherwise use Council social media channels for electioneering.

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.

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

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. 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 Council business and not for re-election purposes.

Information requests for election purposes are welcome. These should be made to Barbara Gavan on 06 306 9611 x832 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 may consider any broader interest in this information alongside the requirement that Council resources are not used to give an electoral advantage to any candidate, and at its discretion make this information available to all other candidates.

Protocol 5: Use of Mayoral resources

Council resources provided for mayoral use should not be used for any electioneering activities associated with any candidate.

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

incumbent mayor seeking re-election will establish a separate office, with separate staff, for any campaigning activities at their own expense.

The incumbent mayor'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 and 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 the Electoral Officer (Warwick Lampp, 021 498 517) as soon as possible.

Attachment 1

South Wairarapa District Council's Social Media Guidelines for Candidates

Candidates must comply with the following guidelines for web and 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 (not a PO Box, private bag or rural number), and you must not use the Council's main office address.
- The Council's social media accounts (listed below), including but not limited to Facebook, 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 and Community Boards.
- The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored and any campaign related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If South Wairarapa District Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed three months before the election date. 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. South Wairarapa District Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but will not associate these posts with any candidates.

For the sake of clarity, South Wairarapa District Council web and social media channels are:

Service or Campaign Name	Website	Business owner
SWDC website	https://www.swdc.govt.nz/	SWDC
SWDC Wikipedia page	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Wairarapa_District	Community

Service or Campaign Name	Website	Business owner
Wairarapa Library Service website	https://ent.kotui.org.nz/client/en_AU/wls	Wairarapa Library Service/SWDC

FACEBOOK

Facebook	Website	Business Owner
SWDC Facebook account	https://www.facebook.com/SouthWairarapaDistrictCouncil/	SWDC
Featherston Community Board	https://www.facebook.com/FeatherstonCommunityBoard/	FCB
Greytown Community Board	https://www.facebook.com/GreytownCommunityBoard/	GCB
Martinborough Community Board	https://www.facebook.com/MartinboroughCommunityBoard/	MCB
Martinborough Library	https://www.facebook.com/martinboroughlibrary/	Wairarapa Library Service/SWDC
Greytown Library	https://www.facebook.com/greytownlibrary/	Wairarapa Library Service/SWDC
Featherston Library	https://www.facebook.com/FeatherstonLibrary/	Wairarapa Library Service/SWDC