



Election protocols for elected members

Updated for the 2025 Local Elections

Context

Local government elections are held every three years. In 2025, the elections will be held on Saturday 11 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.

Elected member (incumbent) seeking re-election, you have two roles. You will continue to make the decisions of Thames-Coromandel District Council as members of its governing body or community boards, 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 the Governance Team.

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. Resources owned by the Council and made available to you should only be used for Council purposes. The use of Council resources¹ for election purposes is unacceptable.
3. Council-run social media accounts are considered Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. You must comply with *Attachment A - Social media guidelines for candidates at all times*.
4. You will continue to have access to the information you need to perform your role as a current elected member. Council officers will not assist with electioneering activities. Your role does not stop three months before polling day - you should be able to fulfil your "business as usual" duties on behalf of the Council up until polling day.
5. These protocols have general application at all times but are especially relevant in the three months before the local election (Friday 4 July – Saturday 11 October). It is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these guidelines.

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. The mayor vehicle is excluded due to having a salary sacrifice but no campaign material is to be displayed on the vehicle.

Protocol 1: Continuation of Council business

The normal business of the 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.

You will continue to have access to the information you need to perform your role as an incumbent. Council officers will not assist with electioneering activities. Your role does not stop three months before polling day - you should be able to fulfil your "business as usual" duties on behalf of the Council up until polling day.

The normal duties of elected members "business as usual" as established by practice and custom include:

- attending and participating in governance formal meetings/workshops/networkings;
- reading agendas and other material before governance formal meetings/workshops/networkings;
- attending to enquiries/feedback from members of the public on council business;
- attending or hosting civic events (citizenship ceremony);
- participating in any council relevant consultative/ engagement processes with the community;
- representing the council or community board on related organisations, where appointed;
- attending and participating in training, conferences and seminars.

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 an elected member. The use of Council resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable.

The Council would be directly promoting a member's re-election prospects if it allowed incumbent elected members to use Council resources ⁽¹⁾ explicitly for campaign purposes. This includes all Council communications facilities (such as Council branding, email, 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 ⁽¹⁾ must not be used for campaigning purposes (including for positions not at Thames-Coromandel District Council).
- Elected members' columns in Council publications will be suspended.
- Elected members' radio slots will be suspended.
- Elected members will be required to comply with Council's social media guidelines for candidates in all aspects of their role.

- Media releases by officers will be limited to what is strictly necessary to communicate current Council business
- Comments or quotations from the Mayor, chairpersons, and portfolio leaders will continue to be used in media releases by officers setting out the Council's position on an issue (for example, where a decision has been made at a committee meeting) but in no way to raise the profile of a candidate.
- If elected members are invited to attend and speak at events, statement about council must be strictly factual and contain no content that might promote, whether directly or indirectly, the electoral prospects of an incumbent elected member.
- Mileage allowances will not be paid for any travel relating to campaigning.

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 or mobile phone 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.

Protocol 3: Social media

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

The Council has produced a set of social media guidelines for candidates – *Attachment A - Social media guidelines for candidates at all times* that includes advice on how to use social media effectively and safely during the election period. You must always comply with these guidelines.

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

Please note that for the pre-election period:

- The 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.
- The 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 the 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 perform 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 welcomed. These should be made to the Governance Support team and will be responded to in accordance with the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. (See Attachment D – Elected Members communication pathway).

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 (Dale Ofsoske 09-973 5212) or Governance team as soon as possible.

Attachment A - 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

- All election advertising, using any media (including social media), must identify the person under whose authority they have been produced, as per section 113 of the Local Electoral Act 2001. This, together with the person's contact details (e.g. email, phone number etc) is referred to as an authorisation statement. This means for any election advertising; you must have such a statement- including all content/images on your social media channel that are authorised by you or your agent. A physical address is now not required.
- The Council's social media accounts (listed in Attachment B), including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, 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. It is the responsibility of candidates to check if a social media account is one of the Council's.
- The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored, and any campaign related, or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If the Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed 3 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. The Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but will not associate these posts with any candidates.

Attachment B - Social media channel list

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/thamescoromandeldistrictcouncil
- Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/visitcoromandel
- Instagram: @coromandel_tcdc
- Twitter: @OurCoromandel and @TC_DC - Civil Defence alerts
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/thames-coromandel-district-council
- Vimeo: www.vimeo.com/ourcoromandel
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/ourcoromandel and any various videos recorded by TCDC and any displaying the TCDC logo

Council controlled organisations' websites:

- Destination Coromandel – www.thecoromandel.com
- Hauraki Rail Trail Trust – www.haurakirailtrail.co.nz

Council Website:

The entirety of the Council website including subpages www.tcdc.govt.nz

Attachment C – Complaints process

Campaigning Complaints

Any complaints in the first instance must be sent to Council's election team
governance.services@tcdc.govt.nz.

Election Signs

Council's Advertising and Signs Bylaw applies to election signage across our district. The bylaw can be found on our website [here](#). Any complaints regarding election signs must be forwarded to Council's Licensing and Compliance Manager.

If erected on state highways, permission must be granted from the New Zealand Transport Agency. Information on signs on state highways can be found [here](#)

Election Process Offences

All complaints regarding the electoral process or authorisation statements must be referred to Thames-Coromandel District Council's Electoral officer.

Dale Ofsoske, Independent Election Services Ltd
Level 2, 198 Federal Street, Auckland 1010
PO Box 5135, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142
Phone - 0800 922 822
Email - dale.ofsoske@electionservices.co.nz
Website - www.electionservices.co.nz

Attachment D – Elected Members communication pathway

If an incumbent elected member is standing for re-election, they must clearly and transparently differentiate between council 'business as usual' and campaigning for re-election. This communication pathway for any questions and request will assist elected members to manage this important distinction.

