

Kaipara District Council

Local Government Election Year Protocols for Elected Members

On Saturday 11 October 2025, Kaipara District will elect a new council. These protocols have been created to provide guidance on the use of council resources in the pre-election period for all candidates (whether current elected members or not).

Key dates

Friday 4 July 2025	Nominations open
Friday 11 July 2025	Pre-election period begins (three months prior to election day)
Friday 1 August 2025	Nominations close (12 noon)
9 – 22 September 2025	Delivery of voting documents to households, voting starts
Saturday 11 October 2025	Election day, voting closes (12 noon)
11 October – 27 October 2025	Period between election day and swearing in of new council
Friday 17 October 2025	Public notice of declaration of results
Friday 12 December 2025	Return of election expenses & donations form

Pre-election period

All candidates are impacted by the three month ‘pre-election period’ (11 July to 11 October). This period is the subject of the good practice advice ‘Communications in the pre-election period’ issued by Local Government New Zealand and Taituarā (previously the Society of Local Government Managers) and peer reviewed by legal advisors from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA).

Candidates are encouraged to be familiar with this document, to ensure their own conduct during the pre-election period does not result in the guidelines being breached or being perceived as having been breached.

Relevant sections are as follows:

Principle 1 – The operation of local authorities continues during the pre-election period. Elected members continue to have the right to govern and make decisions during the pre-election period.

There is no legal requirement for local authorities to avoid making decisions in the pre-election period. Routine business must continue. However, it is best practice, where practicable, to make any significant decisions before the pre-election period begins.

Principle 2: During the pre-election period, communities have the same legitimate need for information about their local authority's decisions and activities as at any other time.

During the pre-election period, the community will continue to be kept informed of council decisions and important matters through usual channels such as agenda reports, minutes, and media releases.

Members of the community can still request information through the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA).

Principle 3 – Local authorities must not promote, or be perceived to promote, the prospects of any candidate, especially a sitting member. Using council resources for re-election of sitting members is unacceptable and possibly unlawful.

Promoting the re-election prospects of a candidate, directly or indirectly, advertently or inadvertently, is not the role of a local authority and could result in an election result being overturned.

An elected member standing for office may not use council resources of any kind for campaigning purposes. This includes, but is not limited to council's 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's human resources.

Other uses of council communications facilities during a pre-election period may also be unacceptable. For example, allowing members access to council resources to communicate with constituents, even in their official capacities as members, could create a perception that council is helping sitting members to promote their re-election prospects over other candidates.

Other important factors to consider during the pre-election period:

Communications

Ceasing all council communications during a pre-election period is not possible. Statutory council business must continue. However, care must be taken to avoid the perception, and the consequent risk of electoral irregularity. Two examples are:

- Journalistic use of photographic material or information that may raise the profile of a member in the electorate should be discontinued during the pre-election period; and
- Access to council resources for members to issue media releases, in their capacities as official spokespersons, should be limited to what is strictly necessary to communicate statutory council business.

To comply with best practice, from the beginning of the pre-election period, elected members must not be quoted in media releases or other council communications unless it is for a statutory purpose. Elected member attendance at public events and tools such as council newsletters, publications, the mayor's newspaper columns or use of photographic material or information that may raise the profile of a member in the electorate will be suspended during the pre-election period.

Some mandatory and routine statutory council business can continue, such as the Annual Report, which would include information (including photos) about current elected members.

For clarity, there are two current workstreams that will be exceptions to the protocols. The Revenue and Finance Policy review and the Local Waters Done Well (Statutory) work. These are long standing work programmes and it is appropriate for quotes from the Mayor in media releases and involvement of elected members at public facing consultation events, for these workstreams.

Council staff

Council staff should always remain politically neutral in their dealings with elected members and the public in general. This is even more important in the pre-election period when there is a heightened interest in Council. Council staff will be briefed prior to the pre-election period to ensure they are

familiar with the requirements for both elected members and staff.

It is not appropriate or acceptable for staff to align themselves to, or demonstrably support, a candidate in their capacity as an employee. This could result in allegations of bias by council.

The chief executive is responsible for setting appropriate election year protocols for staff.

Social Media

A big part of being an elected member is engaging with the community – social media is a useful tool for this. However, during the pre-election period, the following guidelines for candidates apply to your interactions with council social media channels.

Commenting on and sharing council posts

- Kaipara District Council (KDC) web and social media channels may not be used by anyone (candidates or members of the public) for campaigning or electioneering. These channels include (but are not limited to) Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Any such comments will be deleted immediately.
- Any post (positive or negative) made on KDC social media by an individual specifically relating to his or her own (or someone else's) nomination, intention to run for council or election campaign, will be removed immediately.
- Candidates may engage with KDC social media posts (react, share or comment), provided their engagement is not deemed to be campaigning. Any such activity will be removed immediately. This also applies when sharing KDC content to a candidate's own social media. You may be asked to consider removing any commentary you have added to posts where it breaches protocol. Refer to the Taituarā guide, "[Communications in the pre-election period](#)".
- Resources that have already been produced and made available publicly through KDC digital channels may be shared by candidates to educate or inform people about what council does. However, we will not supply original versions of these assets to candidates.

Working with staff

- No candidate should approach KDC staff (in their capacity as a staff member) for advice or support with the set up or management of their social media accounts.
- Candidates must not actively solicit social media sharing, posting or any other form of endorsement from staff (in their capacity as a staff member). Council staff must observe political neutrality when performing their duties as an employee of council.

KDC will:

- Monitor all candidate pages during the pre-election and election period.
- Remain neutral during the election process but will encourage people to stand for election and encourage the public to vote in the elections. Activity will not be associated with any candidates.

Requests for information

All requests for information should be lodged as official information requests and will be treated as such. Please also note that the information released will also be provided to all other candidates to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged (actual or perceived).

Other uses of council communications facilities during a pre-election period may also be unacceptable. For example, allowing members access to council resources to communicate with constituents, even in their official capacities as members, could create a perception that council is helping sitting members to promote their re-election prospects over other candidates.

Definitions

Council resources means: council's human resources; budgets; and council-owned, or controlled, property and other resources; including information technology and telecommunications devices

Electioneering means activity that relates exclusively to the campaign for the election of a candidate and occurs solely in the candidate's capacity as a candidate, and not in his or her capacity as a member of the council.

Pre-election period means the three months prior to election day (11 July to 11 October 2025).

Complaints about potential breaches of the protocols

Complaints about potential breaches of the protocols must be made in writing to Kaipara District Council's Chief Executive who will consider each complaint on a case by case basis with reference to this and other relevant policies.

Complaints about the conduct of the elections are made to the electoral officer. If any complaint involves the use of council resources the electoral officer will bring the complaint to the attention of the chief executive.