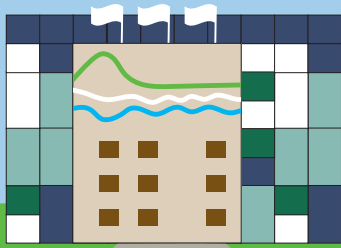


Protocols for Elected Members in an Election year



Context

Local Government elections will be held on Saturday, 8 October 2022. The period leading up to an election is a time of high interest from the media, members of the public and electoral candidates.

As an Elected Member seeking re-election, you have two roles. You will continue to make the decisions as a member of the Regional Council, while at the same time campaigning for re-election as a candidate.

These protocols guide you in your dual role as an Elected Member and candidate seeking re-election and are based on the Office of the Auditor General's Guidelines. For further guidance or clarification, **please contact Tone Nerdrum Smith - Deputy Electoral Officer**, or **Yvonne Tatton - Governance Manager**.

Key points

- 1 If you are standing for re-election, you must clearly and transparently separate the activities conducted in your current Councillor role (e.g., business-as-usual activities) and those you conduct as a candidate seeking re-election.
- 2 Resources¹ owned by the Regional Council and made available to you as a Councillor should only be used for Regional Council purposes. Using Regional Council resources for election purposes is unacceptable. This includes Regional Council-owned computers and mobile phones, social media channels, your Regional Council email address and publications.
- 3 Regional Council-run social media accounts are considered Regional Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. Please 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 a current Councillor. Regional Council staff will not provide assistance with any electioneering activities.
- 5 These protocols must be applied at all times, but are especially relevant in the three months before the local election **Friday, 8 July – Saturday, 8 October**. It is your responsibility to ensure your behaviour falls within these guidelines.

¹ Regional Council resources include, but are not limited to, Regional Council-owned or -controlled property and other resources including the Regional Council logo and branding, all Regional Council marketing and communication channels (including social media), Regional Council-supplied business cards, stationery, computers, email, mobile phones, photocopiers, cars, Regional Council venues (other than those available for hire to the general public), Regional Council funds, and Regional Council's human resources.

Continuation of Regional Council business

The normal business of Regional Council continues during the pre-election period. Councillors 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, 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.

Use of Regional Council resources

Regional Council must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a current member. The use of Regional Council resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable.

Regional Council would be directly promoting a member's re-election prospects, if it allows current Elected Members to use Regional Council resources explicitly for campaign purposes. This includes all Regional Council communications facilities (such as Regional Council branding, stationery and postage, social media channels, and communications devices).

Regional Council communications will be restricted during the pre-election period, to remove any perception that the Regional Council is helping Councillors to promote their re-election prospects over other candidates.

Therefore, during the pre-election period:

- Regional Council resources must not be used for campaigning purposes. This includes Regional Council-supplied computers, social media channels, email addresses, mobile phones and telephone numbers.
- Any current Regional Council promotion of Elected Members will be suspended.
- Elected Members will be required to comply with Regional Council's social media guidelines for candidates in all aspects of their role. Refer **Attachment 1**.
- Where possible, staff 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 Regional Council contact information will still be available (for example on the Regional Council website or in the Annual Report) so your constituents can contact you about Regional Council business. However, you should not be using your Regional 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.

Social media

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

Regional Council has produced a set of social media guidelines for candidates – **Attachment 1**. You must comply with these guidelines at all times.

Regional Council's social media channels will remain neutral at all times. Regional 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:

- Regional 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.
- Regional 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 Regional 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 Regional 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.

Availability of information

Elected Members will have access to the information they need to discharge their roles during an election time and their Regional Council contact information will still be publicly available. However, Regional Council staff will not provide assistance with electioneering activities.

You will continue to be supported in your role as an Elected Member. However, information requests should be clearly related to Regional Council business and not for re-election purposes.

Information requests for election purposes are welcome and will be carried out in accordance with the **(Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987)**.

Where the Regional Council supplies information that is not already in the public domain to a candidate, the Regional Council may consider any broader interest in this information, alongside the requirement that Regional 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.

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) or Deputy Electoral Officer (Tone Nerdrum Smith, 0276 227 248) or Governance Manager (Yvonne Tatton, 021 929 243)** as soon as possible.

Bay of Plenty Regional 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:

- 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.
- The Regional Council's social media accounts (**listed in Appendix 1**), including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Neighbourly and YouTube, 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 Regional Council-controlled organisations.
- The Regional Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored and any campaign related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If Bay of Plenty Regional Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed three months prior to 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 Regional Council, or election campaign, will be removed immediately.
- Candidates cannot reply to the Regional Council's social media posts, or share 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 Regional Council's social media accounts.
- Candidates cannot rate, review, check-in or tag the Regional Council's social media channels.
- The Regional Council's social media accounts will remain neutral. Bay of Plenty Regional Council will promote elections and the importance of voting, but will not associate these posts with any candidates.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council's social media channel list

Facebook	<u>www.facebook.com/boprc</u> <u>www.facebook.com/coastcarebayofplenty</u> <u>www.facebook.com/BOPCivilDefence</u> <u>www.facebook.com/loveourrotorualakes</u>
Instagram	<u>www.instagram.com/bayofplentyregionalcouncil</u>
Neighbourly	<u>www.neighbourly.co.nz/organisation/bay-of-plenty-regional-council-2</u>
Twitter	<u>www.twitter.com/boprc</u> <u>www.twitter.com/BOPCivilDefence</u>
YouTube	<u>www.youtube.com/bopregionalcouncil</u>
LinkedIn	<u>www.linkedin.com/company/bay-of-plenty-regional-council</u>
Websites	<u>www.boprc.govt.nz</u> <u>www.participate.boprc.govt.nz</u>