



INVERCARGILL CITY COUNCIL

ELECTION PROTOCOLS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Updated March 2022 for the Local Government Elections.

Attachments:

- an example of council social media guidelines for candidates
- an example of a social media channel list



CONTEXT:

Local government elections are held every three years. In 2022, the elections will be held on Saturday 8 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 your council as members of the Council or its 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 your Governance team in the first instance.

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 resources for election purposes is unacceptable. This includes Council-owned computers and mobile phones, social media channels, email addresses and publications.

3. Council-run social media accounts are considered Council resources and must remain politically neutral during the election. You must comply with any 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. 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 8 July – Saturday 8 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.

In the context of the recently released Taituarā guidelines for “Communications in the pre-election period”, it would be reasonable to require that elected members stop using Council-funded slots, although common sense has to prevail. For example, an elected member invited to write a newspaper column or speak on a radio slot, not funded by the local authority,

cannot reasonably be seen to be receiving an “electoral advantage at ratepayers’ expense”.

Similarly, whether or not a mayoral column in a council newsletter represents a form of electioneering needs to be judged on the nature of the content and how it is presented. Elected members’ roles do not stop three months before polling day - they should be able to fulfil their “business as usual” duties on behalf of the council up until polling day. There is no lacuna or gap in an elected member’s three-year term.

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.

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

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

Most councils have produced a set of social media guidelines for candidates. Advice on how to effectively and safely use social media during the election period is in the example attached as Attachment One to this protocol. You should comply with your Council guidelines at all times.

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 above. If you are unsure or require clarification please contact Michael Morris (Deputy Electoral Officer).

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, including by your Elected Member Support Advisor. 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 the Governance team 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

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.

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 your Electoral Officer or Deputy Electoral Officer as soon as possible.

INVERCARGILL CITY 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:

- During the lead up to elections, the current mayor and councillors may be used in social media posts where it is appropriate and is considered 'business as usual' to use them. This may be in images or quotes.
- 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, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Neighbourly, 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.
- The Council's social media accounts are constantly monitored and any campaign related or electioneering content will be removed immediately.
- If Invercargill City Council already follows your public social media accounts, please note you will be unfollowed 3 months prior to the election date. This protocol is in line with the Local Electoral Act 2001.
- Any social media post made by anybody on a Council social media page related to their own or somebody 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. Invercargill City Council will promote elections and the importance of voting but will not associate these posts with any candidates.
- It is illegal for candidates to display their completed voting papers on social media, so please do not take a photo of your completed voting paper and post it on Facebook etc.

APPENDIX ONE

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNEL LIST

Candidates must comply with the following guidelines for web and social media use and presence related to campaigning.

FACEBOOK

The Council has a number of Facebook pages:

- Invercargill City Council
- Bluff Community Board
- Vote Murihiku 2022
- Invercargill Word On The Street
- Invercargill Animal Care Facility
- Splash Palace
- Invercargill City Libraries and Archives
- Civic Theatre - Invercargill
- WasteNet Southland
- He Waka Tuia
- Rugby Park - Invercargill
- Discover Our Parks Invercargill
- Friendly Invercargill
- Invercargill Youth Council

WEBSITES

- icc.govt.nz
- invercargillnz.com
- wastenet.org.nz
- imagineinvercargill.nz
- ilibrary.co.nz
- hewakatuia.nz

YOUTUBE

- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7eKsSpTrEORjID6OtEZYTw>

LIST OF COUNCIL ORGANISATIONS

- Southland Regional Development Agency
- Invercargill Venue and Events Management Ltd
- Invercargill City Holdings Limited
- Invercargill Airport Limited
- Invercargill City Forests Limited
- Invercargill City Properties Limited
- Electricity Invercargill Limited
- HWCP Limited
- Bluff Maritime Museum
- Bluff Pool Trust
- Invercargill Community Recreation and Sport Trust
- Invercargill City Charitable Trust
- Southland Museum and Art Gallery Trust Board