

Election protocols for Council staff



These election protocols provide guidance to CDC staff, including contractors and consultants during the election year, and particularly in the three months before the local body elections on 11 October 2025

Potential election issues for staff

- Staff must remain politically neutral when dealing with elected members and the public
- Actions of staff may lead to allegations of election bias
- Elected members cannot use Council resources for campaigning
- In the workplace staff must not align themselves with, or support a candidate (refer below to activities you can undertake out of work time).
- Any staff wishing to stand for election must advise their manager in the first instance
- Any breach of this protocol may relate to disciplinary action being taken

Being politically neutral

- Staff must remain politically neutral at all times when dealing with Councillors and the public.
- Do not be drawn into discussion that could put your neutrality at risk. Refer to your Manager for guidance.

- Be wary of tricky and leading questions or being drawn into inappropriate discussions with the public or the media related to the elections and either sitting or aspiring candidates. Be aware of these questions being asked in a social setting, such as a bar or other event. Employees must not make comments to the media [including via social media e.g. Facebook] about election matters.
- Any media queries are to go through the Council communications team.
- You can attend Candidate evenings and submit a question. However, it is important not to get drawn into debates about council projects/policy or answer any questions on behalf of council.
- Political activities, including researching candidates, commenting on issues, and attending candidate meetings, should take place in personal time and should not use Council resources (including Council computers and phones).

Key Dates

11 July
Pre-election period
Staff must observe election protocols

4 July
Nominations open

12 August
Nominations close

11 October
Election Day
Preliminary election results expected

Staff must not align themselves with, or support, candidates [sitting or aspiring]

Employees have the same rights of free speech as other members of the public and are entitled to their own political views, membership of a political party and may stand for political office. However, they must remain politically neutral while working with the current Council as well as any future Council.

As mentioned under 'Being politically neutral', political activities, including researching candidates, commenting on issues and attending candidate meetings, should take place in personal time and should not use Council resources [including computers and mobile phones].

Extra care should be taken to ensure any Council organised event [or issuing statements] are not linked to a candidate's campaign.

Staff must not use work communication tools to seek support for a particular candidate or candidates or use any staff forum as a platform for encouraging support for a candidate or candidates.

Use of Council resources to promote re-election

Resources such as equipment located within Council offices or belonging to Council can not be used, for example: computers, mobile phones, email, stationery, photocopiers, stamps and business cards. Council venues can be used for election purposes provide candidates pay for using them.

Council publications, including social media, should not raise, or have the effect of raising, the profile of any current elected member or any other candidate.

Requests for information

When a candidate requests information that is not publicly available, and the Council supplies it, it may be appropriate to supply this information to all other candidates.

A sitting member achieves an electoral advantage at the ratepayer's expense Public funds administered by Council must not be used for electioneering or to benefit one candidate over another. However, this is balanced between the fact that councillors are still in office during the election campaign and remain responsible for the activities of Council that are business as usual.

Council-arranged or supported forums or electioneering and meetings must not be used for campaigning purposes. Care must be taken that any Council publication does not promote an inappropriately high profile of any councillor.

This is managed by way of a Council pre-election communications policy that determines guidelines for Council media and publication protocols during the pre-election period.

Council publications / social media

Council publications, including social media should not raise, or have the effect of raising the profile of any current elected member or any other candidate

Any staff wishing to stand for election must advise their manager

It is important that any member of staff wishing to stand as a candidate in the Carterton District Council local body election gives adequate warning to their manager, so that the potential for conflicts of interest and any resourcing implications can be assessed.

There is no statutory restriction in the case of an employee standing for, or being elected to, another authority outside the Carterton District Council area, including the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Normally conflicts of interests will be able to be managed. In the [rare] event of a serious conflict of interest the staff member may be asked to take annual leave or leave without pay from the day they put in their nomination until the preliminary result is declared. Decisions will be justified as per s103A of the Employment Relations Act 2002 and will be consistent with what a fair and reasonable employer would do in the circumstances. Staff who are considering standing for a local body election should be aware of these possibilities.

Any member of staff of the Carterton District Council, who is elected as a member of the Carterton District Council will be required to resign as a council employee [Section 41(5) Local Government Act 2002].

How to apply the protocols

These protocols apply during the election year, and specifically during the pre-election period, July 4 to October 11 2025, to staff of the Carterton District Council.

However, one exception is regarding staff wishing to stand for election.

If you are thinking about standing or intending to stand, you are requested to speak with your manager at the earliest possible time, as this will enable your work to be managed in a way that will avoid any conflicts of interest.

Situations that may occur will sometimes rely on the judgment and common sense of the staff member involved, whilst applying the principles described above

Breaches of protocol

Any breach of this protocol may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Review

This protocol will be reviewed every three years and prior to local body elections.

For more information, contact:

- Democratic Services
demservices@cdc.govt.nz

Further information

- Visit cdc.govt.nz/elections

