



Election Year Policy

April 2022



Policy Statement

This policy applies during a local government or General Election year. It is based on the general principles for central and local government organisations during an election year as outlined by the Office of the Auditor General and State Services Commission. It has been developed with reference to Auckland Council and the wider Council-Controlled Organisations (CCO) group policies.

Purpose

This policy provides direction and guidance to Auckland Transport (AT) employees, directors, and representatives in order to ensure political neutrality is maintained and to ensure that conflicts of interest between duties and personal political views/beliefs are avoided.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All AT employees;
- AT representatives:
 - Contractors & consultants
 - Agency temps (in accordance with the terms of their supplier agreement with AT)
 - Staff on secondment from other organisations/agencies
 - Volunteers
- AT Directors

The policy applies in any year in which a local government or General Election will be held. In such a year, this policy applies in the three months leading to election day.

Advice and Support

AT employees, representatives and Directors are encouraged to seek advice to address any issues which may arise during the election year. Advice and support is available from:

- Board Chair (for AT Directors)
- Chief Executive, EGM Stakeholder, Communities & Communications and EGM Culture & Transformation (for AT employees or representatives)

Policy Principles

Neutrality

- A major characteristic of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements is that public servants are apolitical. As CCOs are part of the Auckland Council group the same principles are applicable to CCO employees, contractors and Board members.



- During the pre-election period (defined as three calendar months prior to the date of a Local Body or General election), increased public attention to the way CCOs carry out their functions is likely. AT employees, representatives and directors need to act and be seen to act with political neutrality.
- The actions of those covered by this policy must not detract from their ability to work with politicians, regardless of their political views.
- Having a heightened awareness of the need to be seen to act with political neutrality does not mean the work of Auckland Transport is disrupted. It does mean however, that during an election year and particularly during the pre-election period, additional care must be taken to ensure that activities are not seen, in any way, to support or preference one candidate over another.
- This is particularly important with respect to activities such as media relations, advertising campaigns, responding to Local Government and Official Information Act requests, interaction with electoral candidates, public speaking engagements, programme and strategy launches and promotions, and the release of discussion documents. Particular principles applying to these activities are provided below.

Participation in political activities as individuals

- AT employees, representatives and directors have the same political rights and freedoms as other New Zealanders, but must maintain political neutrality as they are required to work with current or future elected members. AT employees, representatives and directors are entitled to be members of political parties.
- Those with regular contact with elected members should exercise particular care and judgment in relation to their personal political activities to ensure the maintenance of political neutrality in their professional capacity.
- AT employees or representatives considering standing as candidates in an election must advise their manager at the earliest opportunity. If an AT employee or representative nominates his or herself for election they will be required to take leave (either paid or unpaid depending on leave accrual etc) until after the official declaration of the election result. Those who are elected are required to resign after being sworn in for office, to ensure no conflict of interest arises.

General business of Auckland Transport continues during pre- election period

- The normal business of council and its CCOs continues during an election year, including during the pre-election period.
- During the pre-election period a heightened level of media and public scrutiny about decisions and business can be expected. During this period, the Board may choose to take these into consideration prior to any decisions affecting policy or major investment.



Guidelines regarding election campaigning

- AT employees or representatives in the course of their duties, and AT directors are not permitted to work on, or be engaged in any campaigning material or activities which may assist a candidate's campaign.

Use of Auckland Transport resources for communication

- Auckland Transport resources means: human resources; budgets; and owned or controlled property and other resources; including information technology and telecommunications devices. Policies regarding the acceptable uses of computers and telephones will apply during the pre-election period.
- The use of Auckland Transport communication resources for election purposes is not permitted. Auckland Transport must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the election prospects of a sitting member or any candidate for election.
- Particular care will be exercised in the use of Auckland Transport resources for communications to ensure that they do not unreasonably raise, or could have the effect of unreasonably raising, the personal profile of any candidate for election. This will include consideration of the tone, content and style of any communication to ensure that it is factual, accurate, complete, fair and politically neutral.
- Photographs of candidates or elected members, mayoral and members' columns in Auckland Transport publications (including for example the Annual Report), and advertorials, will be suspended during the pre-election period.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
All AT Employees, and Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to and comply with this policy and related procedures. • Notify your manager when considering standing as candidates in an election
Policy Owner/Exec. GM Stakeholder, Communities & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, consult, seek approval of, and implement this policy and related procedures. • Monitor and update this policy and related procedures.
Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the principles of this policy. • Notify applicable personnel of the requirements of this policy and related procedures.
AT Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to and comply with this policy and related procedures.



Related Documents

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the other relevant policies and guidelines, including (but not limited to):

- Email and Internet Use Policy
- Media Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Guidelines
- Mobile Device Policy and Guidelines

Related Legislation

- Local Government Act 2002
- Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2010

Approval & Review Details

Owner	Executive General Manager Stakeholder, Communities and Communications
Stakeholders for consultation	Executive Leadership Team Chief Executive
Authorised by:	Chief Executive
Issue date	April 2019
Review date	April 2020
Wally Thomas (Executive General Manager Stakeholder, Communities and Communications)	
Shane Ellison (Chief Executive)	

