



Report **04.370**
Date 22 June 2004
File E/09/07/08

Committee **Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee**
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Greater Wellington's Communication Policy for the Pre-Election Period

1. Purpose

To ask Council to endorse the following rules for communication for the pre-election period, from 9 July 2004 to 9 October 2004.

2. Background

The Office of the Controller and Auditor-General recently published a best practice guide on managing the public communications of local authorities. The guide includes recommendations on the types of communications that are acceptable in a pre-election period (**Attachment 1**). The pre-election period for the 2004 local body elections runs from 9 July 2004 to 9 October 2004.

The Office of the Controller and Auditor-General recommends that councils adopt a communications policy based on their guidelines. An agreed set of rules would ensure that both councillors and officers clearly understand what communication activities are acceptable during the three-month pre-election period.

3. Comment

3.1 Greater Wellington must not promote the re-election prospects of a sitting Council member

It is recommended that the Council adopt the rules under 3.2 and 3.3 of this report for the 2004 pre-election period. These rules only apply to Greater Wellington's communications. Councillors are still free to undertake any personal communication for election purposes or otherwise, provided they use their own resources and make it clear that the opinions they express are their personal views and are not the Council's position.

The rules are based on the premise that Greater Wellington must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a sitting Council member, either directly or indirectly. They also recognise that decisions to

restrict communications must be balanced with the need for Greater Wellington to continue to communicate matters of Council business to the public.

3.2 Rules for communication for the pre-election period from 9 July 2004 to 9 October 2004

It is suggested that the following rules be observed during the pre-election period from 9 July 2004 to 9 October 2004:

- Greater Wellington's resources shall not be used for re-election purposes.
- Councillors shall not use council resources to express their personal views or opinions.
- Communication by Greater Wellington shall be limited to what is necessary to carry out or convey council business. The chief executive will determine this.
- Greater Wellington's mass communication facilities, such as *Elements*, radio advertising, rates newsletters and our website, shall not include content that may raise the profile of a councillor or councillors.
- The chief executive, or his delegates, alone have the power to authorise Greater Wellington communications.

3.3 What does this mean in practice?

- Councillors must not use council communication facilities and resources such as stationery, postage, internet, photographs, clothing, email and telephone for campaign purposes.
- Councillors may continue to access council resources to communicate with individual constituents in their official capacities as members of the Council. However, care should be taken to avoid using, or avoid the perception of using, these resources for campaign purposes.
- At the discretion of the chief executive, the Council Chairperson and committee chairpersons will continue to represent the Council. Their quotes and comments will continue to be used in media statements setting out the Council's position on issues, e.g. major decisions made at committee meetings, the announcement of new initiatives.
- Mandatory communications such as public notices required by statute, our annual plan and annual report will continue.
- The text on councillors' interests will be removed from our website, as this could be misconstrued as an election statement.
- Mass communications from Greater Wellington with constituents will not contain quotes from or about councillors, nor include journalistic use of

photographic material that may raise the profile of a councillor or councillors.

- Councillors will not be able to include the Council logo, council telephone numbers or council email addresses in their own media releases, election campaign material, or private advertising.
- It is recommended by the Office of the Controller and Auditor-General that councillor publications such brochures and newspaper columns include a disclaimer that states the column is not sponsored by Greater Wellington Regional Council, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Council. The views of the Council and the opinions of the individual should be clearly distinguished in the body of the text.

4. Recommendation

That the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee recommends to Council that it confirms and agrees to observe the pre-election communication policy set out in this paper for the period 9 July 2004 to 9 October 2004.

Report prepared by:

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