

Draft Election Policy

Recommendations

It is recommended that the board:

- i. Approve, subject to any amendments, the attached draft AT Election Year Policy

Executive summary

A draft AT Election Year Policy has been developed for staff and the Board. It mirrors similar policy adopted by Auckland Council. It provides a practical framework under which staff can operate during the period of heightened political sensitivity, and public and media scrutiny.

The draft policy also contains a number of references to Directors and their activities during this period.

Once adopted an internal communications programme will ensure staff are aware of their obligations under the policy.

Background

A characteristic of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements is that public servants are apolitical. As CCOs are part of the AC group, that principle may be seen to apply, particularly in the public's mind.

At the same time, AT employees must be able to maintain supportive relationships, provide robust advice, and undertake normal decision making during the pre-election period (defined in 2013 as 12 July to 12 October).

The attached draft policy provides a practical framework for engagement with sitting elected members and candidates (Attachment 1)

It also provides some guidance for AT Board members.

Strategic context

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 give preference to any candidate over another.

This is particularly important with respect to activities such as media relations, advertising campaigns, responding to Official Information Act requests, programme and strategy launches, for example.

Issues and options

A significant number of AT staff have daily interaction with elected members and/or candidates in the lead up to the election. It is important to provide them with a framework with which to engage to ensure that there is no suggestion of bias or conflict of interest.

Likewise, clear direction needs to be given to staff who may choose to stand for public office thereby creating a direct conflict of interest with their role at AT.

AT's draft policy has been developed in consultation with AC, who in turn have developed a policy with input from the PSA and other unions.

A key issue for the Board is that business as usual must continue during the pre-election period. In that regard, attention is drawn to paragraph 15; it may be considered that this is an overly conservative approach and direction is sought from the Board on this point in particular. Likewise paragraph 16, which makes reference to Directors' involvement in political campaigning.

Next steps

Subject to any amendments to the draft policy an internal communications programme will ensure all staff are made aware of their obligations. This will begin mid-May and escalate up to and during the official pre-election period.

Attachments

Number	Description
1	Auckland Transport Election Year Policy

Document ownership

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