



LOCAL BODY HANDBOOK

VOTE. STAND. HELP OUT.

Local Body Elections 2025



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VOTE

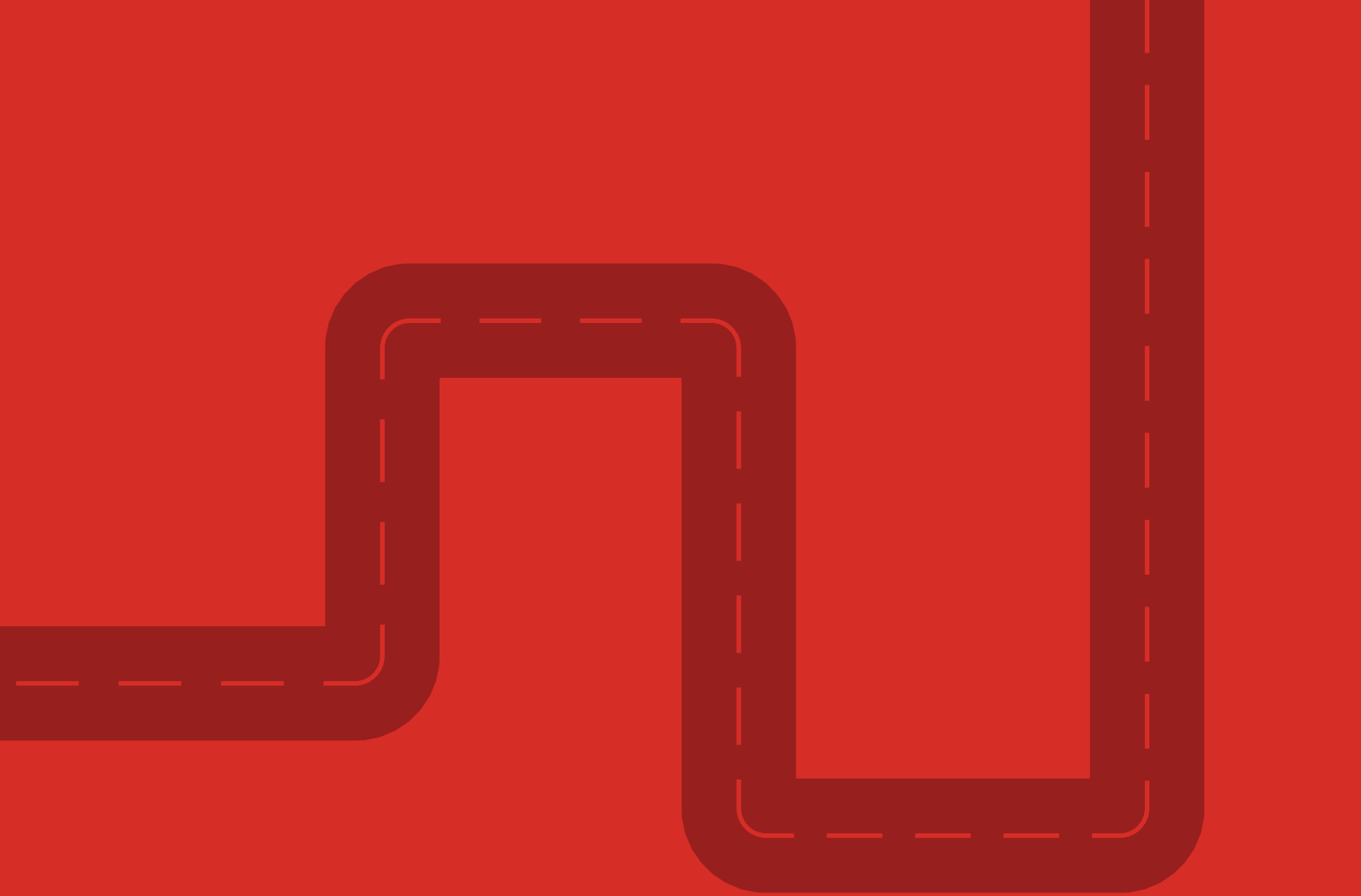
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01

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS

Local councils control more of your daily life than you might think — rates, rubbish, roadworks, building rules, fluoride, water access, even the signs you're allowed to display.

Yet more and more, councils are becoming captured by ideology, bureaucracy, and centralised agendas — while the basics get worse, and the bills get higher.



This October, New Zealanders have a chance to make a real difference by electing people who care about core services, common sense, and community control. Whether you're standing as a candidate or casting your vote — this guide will help you cut through the spin, ask better questions, and push for real change at the local level.

Why Should You Care?

Because it's your money, your land, your say. Whether you're rural or urban, rates are rising, freedoms are shrinking, and decisions are being made without you.

Local democracy only works if people show up, speak up and vote with their eyes open.

What You Can Do?

- Ask better questions of candidates and councillors.
- Support those who stand for local choice, fairness and core services.
- Consider standing yourself! We need strong community voices.

Stay informed: www.councilwatch.co.nz

Let's make 2025 the year councils get back to basics, back to serving the people. Share this. Start the conversation. Ask the hard questions. Then vote.



02 LOCAL ELECTIONS TIMELINE

Key Dates for the 2025 Local Elections

Thinking of standing or simply casting your vote? Here are the important deadlines to keep in mind—from nominations to final results. Make sure you're enrolled, informed, and ready to have your say.



Check you are enrolled to vote	NOW
Consider being a candidate	NOW
Candidate nominations open Nomination deposit \$200 due	4 July 2025
Candidate nominations close (12pm)	1 August 2025
Candidates announced	8 August 2025
Final electoral roll certified by Electoral Officer	5 September 2025
Voting papers sent to enrolled voters	9 September – 22 September 2025
Voting opens	9 September – 11 October 2025
Voting closes (12 noon)	11 October 2025
Progress and preliminary results published	11 October 2025
Final results announced	14 October – 17 October 2025



03

THE KEY ISSUES 2025

What's really going on and why it matters to you.

Councils were created to serve the people but somewhere along the way, many lost their way. Across New Zealand, ratepayers are paying more and getting less. Services are slipping, debt is ballooning, and core responsibilities are being sidelined in favour of political agendas, bloated bureaucracy, and centralised control.

From forced water fluoridation and digital surveillance to disappearing car parks and unelected decision-makers, the issues go far beyond potholes and playgrounds. This isn't just about council spending, it's about transparency, accountability, and the future of local democracy.

<https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/KEC5:1>

What Are The Key Issues?

Rates Are Out Of Control

Rates are through the roof, but the quality of services is slipping. Councils are spending more than ever, often on consultants, vanity projects, and bloated bureaucracy. Where's the value for ratepayers?

Debt & Borrowing Blowouts

Council debt is spiralling. In many areas, servicing the debt now consumes a huge portion of the budget. How can councils claim to be building a better future when they're mortgaging it to the hilt?

Roads, Parking & The War On Cars

Walking and biking can be great options for those who choose them. However, councils are redesigning towns to encourage people to leave their cars at home, without their consent. Car parks are disappearing. Lanes are being narrowed. Main streets are suffering under the banner of "vibrancy," while small businesses lose foot traffic and locals struggle to get into town and emergency services are hampered in their efforts to support communities.

Infrastructure Neglect

Councils pour millions into rebrands and "transformational" projects while the basics — stormwater, footpaths, and rural roads — are left to crumble. Are we building better communities or ignoring the foundations?

Water Centralisation

Some coordination makes sense — shared infrastructure, better safety standards. But "Local Water Done Well" is just the new name for Three Waters, and the centralising agenda is still very real. Will your council defend genuine local ownership, or just comply with centralised control.

Fluoride Without Consent

Councils across the country are adding fluoride to their water supplies without public support. Health mandates shouldn't override local voices. Why are communities being forced to medicate their water supply?

Lost Focus On Core Services

Councils are drifting from the basics, distracted by ideology and vanity projects, while ratepayers foot the bill. How much is going to essential services, and how much is lost to fluff and "strategy"? Learn more with Public sector management consultant Kathryn Ennis-Carter Webinar: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/KEC5:1>

Māori Wards

Maori wards are undemocratic and unnecessary. Maori are able to be elected through the same channels as everyone else, without requiring race-based seats. Maori wards and other forms of co-governance at the local level are a major frustration for ratepayers. At this year's Local Body Elections, referendums will be held at each council on the question of whether to have dedicated Māori wards and constituencies on local councils in New Zealand.

Democracy Under Threat

Un-elected co-governance, government-appointed panels, and creeping centralisation are quietly replacing local votes and community voice. Shouldn't all decision-makers be elected and accountable to the public?

Climate Change Policies

Climate change is being used to justify sweeping planning reforms, new levies, and even forced relocation through "managed retreat." Will your council protect property rights, or help push people off their land in the name of resilience? * Meanwhile regional councils are not doing their core jobs of managing our lakes, rivers ,etc - proactively dredging /removing gravel etc while talking "nature-based" solutions instead . Whatever happened to common sense and basic maintenance of infrastructure paid by Kiwis over decades. Instead , non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Forest and Bird are dictating what our councils do.

Digital Surveillance

Tools like CCTV or theft prevention tech serve a purpose, but councils are quietly adopting facial recognition, smart sensors, and digital ID systems with little public input. Are we protecting safety, or opening the door to a surveillance society?

Urban Overreach

Going local has its benefits — walkable neighbourhoods, vibrant town centres, and less time in traffic. But the "15-minute city" concept is being used to justify top-down planning, zoning restrictions, and even limits on personal movement. When does local living become controlled living, and who draws the lines?

VOTE



04 WHAT'S AT STAKE?

What's It All About?

Every three years, Kiwis get to choose the people who help run their towns, cities, and regions.

Local government plays a huge role in your daily life — from how much you pay in rates, to whether the buses run, to how your town grows. Decisions made at this level affect roads, parks, water, rubbish, libraries, events, housing, and more.

Depending on where you live, you'll vote for different combinations of:

- **Mayor**—Leads the big picture vision and strategy.
- **Councillors**—Make decisions on spending, planning, zoning, bylaws, and more.
- **Local Board Members**—Focus on neighbourhood-level projects and priorities.
- **Community Board Members**—Focus on neighbourhood-level projects and priorities.
- **Regional Councillors**—Manage natural resources, public transport, flood protection, and water quality across broader areas.
- **Licensing Trust Members**—In some places, oversee the sale of alcohol and return profits to the community.

What You Can Stand For / Vote For Mayor

- **Leads** the city or district, sets the vision, chairs council meetings, and represents the area nationally and internationally.
- **Time:** Full-time commitment, often 40+ hours/week.
- **Salary:**
 - ◊ **Auckland:** \$307,000
 - ◊ **Major cities** (e.g. Christchurch, Wellington): \$180,000–\$200,000
 - ◊ **Mid-size districts** (e.g. Hastings, Whakatāne): \$140,000–\$160,000
 - ◊ **Smaller areas:** from \$86,000

Councillor

- **Votes** on transport, housing, spending, rates, environmental policy, bylaws, and development.
- **Time:** Full-time in larger councils, part-time in some rural ones.
- **Salary:**
 - ◊ **Auckland base:** \$111,000+
 - ◊ **National range:** ~\$25,000 (rural) to ~\$108,000+ (urban)

Local Board Member (Auckland only)

- **Focuses** on local parks, facilities, community events, and neighbourhood priorities.
- **Time:** Part-time; board chairs may be full-time.
- **Salary:**
 - ◊ **Auckland:** \$31,000–\$112,000 (based on board size and role)

Community Board Member (Non-Auckland regions)

- **Focuses** on local parks, facilities, community events, and neighbourhood priorities.
- **Time:** Part-time; board chairs may be full-time.
- **Salary:**
 - ◊ \$5,000–\$47,000 depending on council and delegation

Regional Councillor (not applicable everywhere)

- **Oversees** water quality, environmental protection, regional transport, flood management, and more.
- **Salary:** Varies by region; typically ~\$40,000–\$110,000+
- **Examples:** Environment Canterbury, Waikato Regional Council, Horizons, Otago, etc.

Licensing Trust Trustee (only in some Auckland and Southland areas)

- **Manages** alcohol licensing in the community and distributes profits for local good.
- **Time:** Very part-time (meetings only).
- **Pay:** ~\$2,000–\$23,000 depending on size and role.

Quick Comparison

Role	Main Focus	Time	Pay Range
Mayor	Strategic leadership	Auckland—Full-time	\$307k
		National—Full-time	\$86k–\$160k
Councillor	Big picture policy & spending	Auckland—Full-time (usually)	\$111k
		National—Full-time	\$25k–\$108k
Local Board (Auckland only)	Local projects & advocacy	Auckland—Part-time	\$31k–\$112k
Community Board	Local projects & advocacy	National— Part-time	\$5k–\$47k
Regional Councillor	Water, air, transport (region-wide)	PT–FT	~\$40k–\$110k
Licensing Trustee	Alcohol + community funds	Very Part-time	~\$2k–\$23k

05 HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS

Local government in New Zealand plays a vital role in shaping the communities we live in. From planning playgrounds to passing bylaws, councils are responsible for the day-to-day decisions that directly impact our lives. Understanding how councils work helps you become a more informed voter, potential candidate, and community advocate.

Who's Involved?

Local government includes a range of elected representatives:

- **Mayors** lead city or district-wide strategy and represent the whole council
- **Councillors** make key decisions on policies, budgets, and planning matters
- **Local Board Members (Auckland only)** focus on neighbourhood-level needs, parks, libraries, and community facilities

Community Board Members serve as a conduit between a community and its council. They typically represent a smaller area within their local council, to ensure smaller communities' voices aren't lost in the big picture conversations.

- **Regional Councillors** (in regional councils) oversee transport, water, air quality, and land use across larger areas.
- **Licensing Trust Trustees** exist in a few areas (e.g., West Auckland, Invercargill) and manage alcohol sales and community grants.
- **Community Committee Members** (Waikato District Council & Christchurch's Hurunui District Council) There are different levels of 'importance', tasks, remuneration, etc for the varying levels of Local Body ... in the below order.
 - ◊ Ward Councillor
 - ◊ Local Board Member
 - ◊ Community Board Member
 - ◊ Community Committee Member

Elected members are responsible for enhancing the social, environmental, economic, and cultural

wellbeing of their communities. There's no one-size-fits-all approach, and councils differ from region to region, urban to rural. However, there are key rules and processes all councils follow.

Regulation

Local government is created and empowered by Parliament. Councils operate under more than 100 statutes, with the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) being the most significant. It sets out the purpose of local government, the decision-making principles councils must follow, and the scope of their powers.

The Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) is another cornerstone. It ensures council information is accessible to the public unless there's a clear legal reason for withholding it. Transparency and accountability are essential parts of council operation.

Community Engagement

Genuine engagement with local communities is essential. It helps councils make better decisions, increases public trust, and fosters shared responsibility for outcomes.

Councils must consult with residents on major decisions. This includes public meetings, online feedback, surveys, and targeted engagement. The LGA requires councils to consider community views and to provide clear opportunities for input.

Māori Engagement

The councils go out of their way to consider the relationship of Māori, to specifically consult Māori, and to consider any potential effects on Māori when making significant decisions.

Many councils have dedicated Māori wards or advisory boards. Others develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or partnership agreements to guide collaboration.

Committees and Portfolios

Most councils delegate some responsibilities to smaller groups:

- Standing Committees focus on areas like transport, environment, or finance. They allow deeper discussion and, in many cases, delegated decision-making.
- Portfolio Systems assign individual councillors to lead or monitor specific areas (e.g. arts, youth, infrastructure)

Committee membership is decided by the council post-election and reviewed regularly.

Meetings and Standing Orders

Official council meetings are where decisions are made. Meetings follow strict rules called Standing Orders, which set out how debates are run, how votes are taken, and who can speak.

Key points:

- Council meetings are public by default. Anyone can attend unless a matter is legally excluded
- Only decisions made at properly constituted meetings (or delegated to staff/committees) are valid
- Meeting minutes and agendas must be made publicly available

Planning and Reporting

Council planning follows a regular cycle:

1. **Long-term Plan (LTP)** – A 10-year plan updated every 3 years. It sets the council's vision, projects, budgets, and funding strategies.
2. **Annual Plan (AP)** – A yearly update that outlines specific spending and projects for the year ahead
3. **Annual Report** – Reviews the council's performance against its plans, explaining what was achieved and how money was spent

These documents are your best window into what your council is doing and planning. All are published online.

Decision-Making

Every action a council takes involves a decision, whether it's installing traffic lights or approving a housing development.

Good decisions are based on:

- Quality information and evidence
- Legal and financial advice
- Community input

Big decisions require broad consultation. Smaller

ones may rely on staff reports or advisory feedback. All councillors (including the mayor) get one vote. A majority is needed to pass any motion.

Council-Controlled Organisations (CCOs)

Many councils run services through arm's-length companies called Council-Controlled Organisations. These are publicly owned entities governed by boards appointed by the council.

Examples include:

- Auckland Transport and Watercare (Auckland Council)
- Wellington Water (Wellington-region councils)
- ChristchurchNZ (economic development and events)

CCOs allow councils to manage complex services with professional boards, but they must still report back to elected members and the public.

Governance and Delegation

Each newly elected council adopts a governance statement, which sets out:

- How it will operate
- How decisions will be made and delegated
- How public input will be managed

Councils decide early on whether to use committees, portfolios, or other structures. These choices shape how effective, efficient, and transparent decision-making will be.

Remuneration

Pay for elected members is set by the independent Remuneration Authority. Councils don't decide their own salaries.

Each council is assigned a "governance pool" based on its size and complexity. Within that pool:

- The mayor's salary is fixed
- The remaining funds are distributed among councillors and board members based on role, responsibility, and workload

This ensures fairness across regions and encourages high-quality representation.

In Summary

Local government may not always make headlines, but it has a powerful impact on your everyday life. Councils:

- Manage assets worth billions
- Employ thousands of staff
- Make decisions that shape the places we live, work, and play

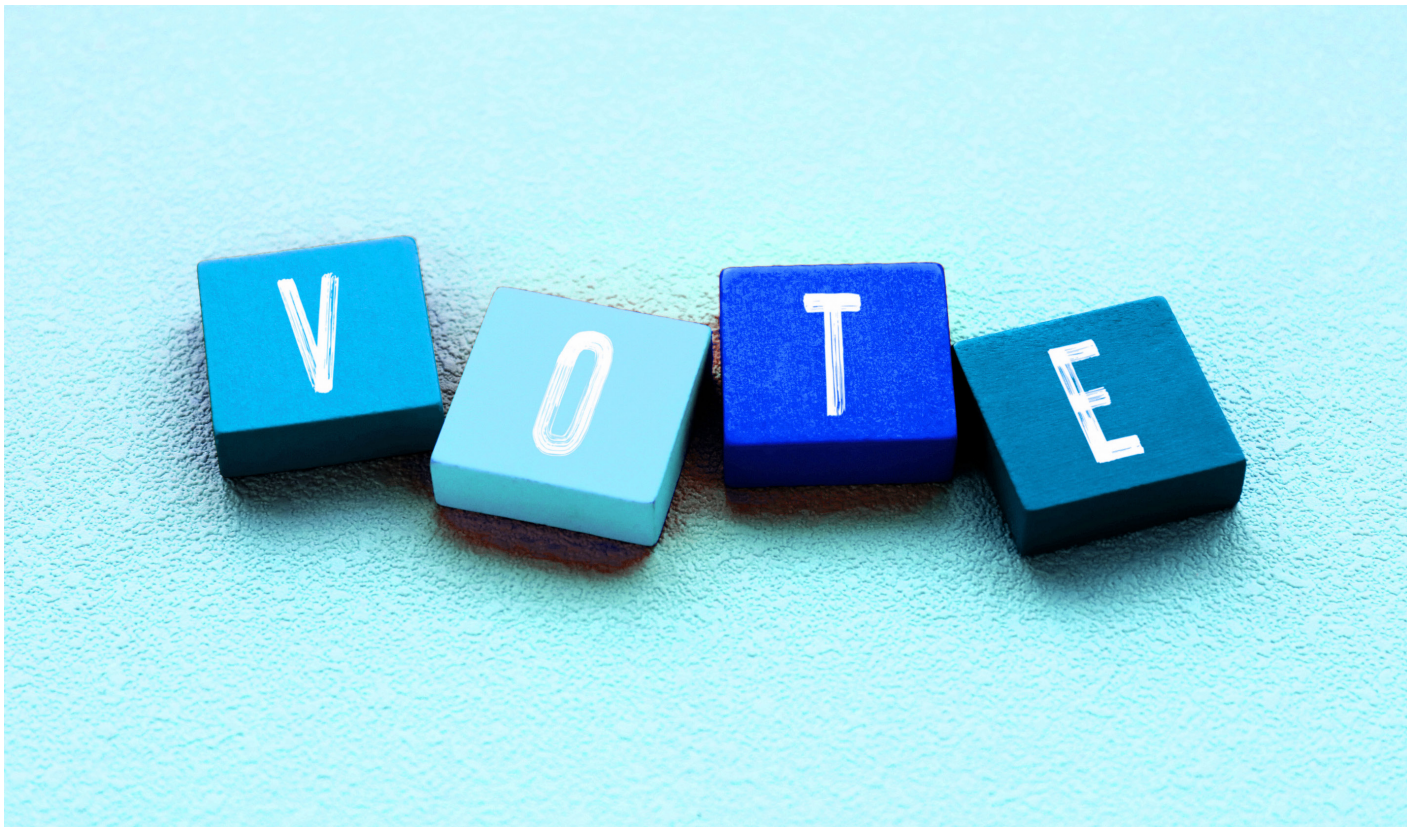
Understanding how councils work — and how you can influence them — is the first step toward stronger, more resilient communities.

VOTE



06 HOW TO VOTE

Local body elections are held every three years to choose the people who make important decisions about your community – like your mayor, councillors, local board, community board and community committee members.



1. Enrol to Vote

- You must be enrolled to vote.
- Enrol, check, or update your details at vote.nz or call 0800 36 76 56.
- You can enrol right up to voting day, but enrol early so you get your voting papers by mail.

2. Watch for Your Voting Pack

- Voting packs are sent to you by mail around mid-September.
- The pack includes:
 - ◊ Your voting papers
 - ◊ A booklet with candidate information
 - ◊ A free return envelope

3. Voting Systems: FPP and STV

New Zealand uses two different voting systems in local elections. Your area will use either:

FPP – First Past the Post

- You tick the candidates you want to vote for.
- The candidates with the most votes win.
- Used in most councils across New Zealand.

STV – Single Transferable Vote

- You rank candidates using numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.).
- You can rank as many or as few as you like, however, you should only vote for the candidates you rate.
- Your vote can transfer to your next choice if your higher choice doesn't need it.

4. Fill Out Your Voting Paper

- Follow the instructions carefully based on your voting system (FPP or STV).
- Use only the pen provided or a black/blue pen.
- Don't write anything else on the paper or it could be disqualified.

5. Send In Your Vote

- Put your voting paper in the return envelope.
- Post it early – no stamp needed.
- Or drop it in an official voting box (usually at libraries or council offices).
- Voting closes at 12 noon on Election Day – usually the second Saturday in October. This is the latest time to post—preferably drop-off.

Need Help?

- Visit vote.nz
- Contact your local council
- Or call 0800 36 76 56

Your vote shapes your community. Make it count!

VOTE



07

UNDERSTANDING VOTING SYSTEMS

Voting System Basics

Before you vote, it is helpful to know what type of voting system your council is using. There are two systems in use. Most councils use First Past the Post (FPP) while others use Single-Transferable Vote (STV).

Important: For both STV and FPP you do not need to rank all candidates! For example: John wants to vote in his local council elections. While there are ten candidates competing for five positions, he only knows of two candidates who support his views and values. He can vote for five, however, his best option is to only vote for the two candidates he has researched. Using STV he will rank these candidates '1' and '2,' and Using FPP he would make one tick next to each of their names. In both systems, all other candidates should be left blank.



How To Vote with STV

STV is a simple system to use. You are casting a single vote, which can transfer between candidates to ensure that it is not wasted. When you vote with STV, you rank the candidates you like, in order of preference starting with your favourite candidate (1) and then your next favourite (2), and so on. Learn more here: <https://www.stv.govt.nz/voting.shtml>

Single Transferable Voting (STV) STV is being used to elect members of these local authorities:

- Kaipara District Council
- Tauranga City Council
- Ruapehu District Council
- New Plymouth District Council
- Palmerston North City Council
- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Porirua City Council
- Wellington City Council
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Marlborough District Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Far North District Council
- Gisborne District Council
- Hamilton City Council
- Nelson City Council

You can rank as many or as few candidates as you want to, depending on how many candidates you support. You do not need to rank all candidates! You only need to rank the candidates you want to support. If you rank a candidate, that may help them to get elected. So don't rank candidates if you don't rate them!

What does the numbering do? By giving the number "1" to a candidate, you are saying that the candidate is your number one choice. By ranking candidates in your preferred order – 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on – you are also

saying which other candidates you prefer: if your top choice doesn't have enough support to get in or, if your top choice doesn't need all the votes they received to be elected.

What else do I need to know? For your vote to be counted you only need to write a single '1'. After that, the numbers you use must be in sequence and there must be only one of each number. If you make a mistake, your vote will be valid up to the point of an error – for example, if you miss out a "4" and just rank 1, 2, 3, and 5, only your first three preferences will be valid.

Sample Voting Paper

The following link takes you to an example of a voting paper. Remember, you do not need to rank all the candidates – just the ones you want to vote for.

<https://www.stv.govt.nz/votingform.shtml>

First Past the Post (FPP)

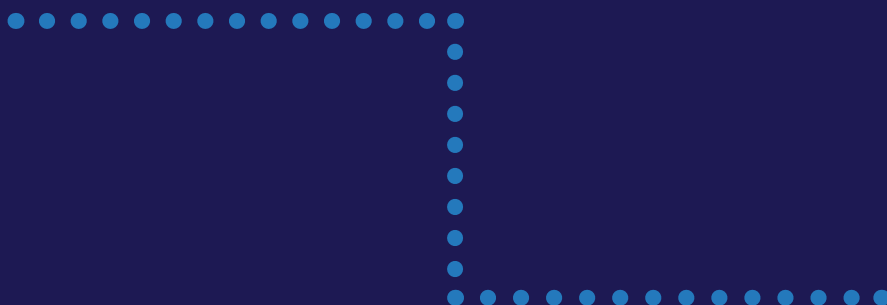
Under the FPP (First Past the Post) electoral system, the candidate with the most votes wins. This is a very simple method of electing candidates and is widely used throughout the world. It was used in New Zealand for Parliamentary elections up until the introduction of MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) in the 1996 general election.

To vote using First Past the Post, voters place a tick next to the name of the candidate(s) they wish to support.

In elections where one member is being elected (such as a mayoral election), FPP does not require that a candidate wins a majority of the votes, just more votes than anyone else. In multi-member elections (such as council elections), voters cast multiple votes to (potentially) elect multiple candidates to represent.

Remember: you do not need to tick all the candidates, just the ones you want to vote for.

STAND



08

CAN I WIN AN ELECTION?

There is clear and consistent evidence that winning a local body council or community board seat in New Zealand is achievable, for individuals who are motivated and involved in their local communities.



Here's the evidence:

1. Low Voter Turnout Creates Opportunity

- Context: Voter turnout in local elections is often low in New Zealand. In the 2022 local elections, average turnout across the country was just 36%.
- Implication: With fewer votes needed to win, determined individuals with strong community ties can mount successful campaigns without massive budgets or party backing.

2. Independent Candidates Frequently Win

- Many successful candidates run as independents, showing it's not essential to be affiliated with a major political party or on a ticket.
- **Example:** In many councils like Kapiti Coast District Council or Far North District Council, independents regularly win mayoral and council seats.

3. Young and First-Time Candidates Have Won

- **Example:** Tamatha Paul was elected to Wellington City Council in 2019 at age 22, after campaigning strongly on youth issues and climate action.
- Rangitikei District Council and others have seen first-time candidates win by actively engaging with their local communities through social media and local events.

4. Community Board Seats Often Uncontested

- In many regions, community board seats go uncontested or are filled by appointment when not enough people stand for election.
- Example: In the 2022 elections, several community boards in districts like Westland and South Waikato had fewer candidates than seats, meaning those who stood were elected automatically.

5. Grassroots Campaigns Can Be Effective

- Local body campaigns can be low-cost and grassroots, focusing on door-knocking, flyers, social media, and public meetings.
- Real case: Multiple candidates report spending less than \$1,000 NZD on successful campaigns by focusing on personal connections and community networks.

Summary

It is entirely achievable to win a local body or community board seat in New Zealand.

The combination of low voter turnout, accessible positions, independent wins, and support resources creates a pathway for everyday citizens to succeed—especially those who are proactive, locally engaged, and clear in their purpose.

STAND



09 HOW TO START

Thinking of Running?

Want to stand as an independent in your local elections?
Whether you're full of fresh ideas, community passion, or just
curious—this guide's your first step



Who Can Stand?

You can stand if you are:

- A NZ citizen;
- 18 or older;
- Enrolled to vote;

...you can stand!

You don't need to live in the area you are standing for (although this is preferable) just get 2 local nominators. No special qualifications or party ties needed— independents are welcome!

What Makes a Good Candidate?

You will make a good candidate if you are:

- A person who cares deeply about your community?
- A good listener and communicator?
- Willing to learn and ask questions?
- A team player? You'll work with others.
- Ready to commit time? It's like a part-time job (or more!).

You might be a teacher, parent, student, business owner, or retiree—diverse voices make stronger councils.

How Can You Run?

You can run:

1. As an independent – just you!
2. With a group or “ticket” (shared values/goals, e.g. Save Our Beaches)
3. With a political party (e.g. Labour, National, Act)

Groups can help with visibility, but every candidate is elected on their own.

How to Nominate Yourself

- Fill out a nomination form
- Get 2 locals to nominate you
- Pay the deposit (refunded if you meet the vote threshold)

Key Dates

- Nominations open: 4 July 2025
- Nominations close: 1 August 2025 (12 noon)
- Voting period: 9 Sept – 11 Oct 2025 (closes 12 noon)

STAND

10

YOUR CAMPAIGN: TOP 10 TIPS

Thinking of stepping up?

You don't need a big budget or political background to run a strong local campaign. What you do need is a clear message, a genuine connection with your community, and a few smart strategies. These 10 tips will help you stay focused, get heard, and make an impact where it counts.

Top 10 Tips for Independent Candidates

1. Start with Why

Know what drives you—and keep it front and centre.

2. Be Yourself

Speak like a real person, not a politician.

3. Listen First

Talk to locals. Walk your patch. Hear what matters.

4. Focus on Local

Stick to council issues like roads, parks, and services.

5. Keep It Simple

Choose 2–3 clear priorities. Make them memorable.

6. Use What You've Got

You don't need a big budget—just a good message.

7. Know the Role

Understand what Council can and can't do.

8. Be Ready to Learn

Stay open, stay curious, and ask good questions.

9. Get Out There

Be visible, stay positive, and meet people where they are.

10. Stick to Your Values

Lead with integrity—even when it's not easy.

1. Start with Why

What drives you? Safer streets? Better services? A clear purpose keeps you focused and helps people connect with your message. Most people care about practical issues that impact everyday life, such as clean parks, safe streets, decent roads, and good rubbish collection. Begin by addressing shared concerns to establish a broad base of support.

Examples:

- Safer footpaths and community spaces
- Reliable rubbish and recycling
- Well-maintained parks, libraries, and playgrounds
- Affordable, connected public transport and planning

2. Be Yourself

You don't need to sound like a politician. Voters respond to real, relatable people. Be honest and authentic. Share what matters to you. Speak in plain language. Let your community know that you care and are ready to serve.

3. Listen First

Trust starts with understanding. Before campaigning, do some listening. People want to feel heard. Here's how:

- Walk your patch: visit playgrounds, town centres, bus stops
- Start casual chats: "What would make this area better?"
- Use social media: run polls, ask questions, read the comments
- Talk to local schools, sports clubs, and community hubs
- Look at council surveys and long-term plans for insights

Being viewed as someone who listens makes all the difference.

4. Focus on Local

This is about local issues, including roads, parks, water, waste, footpaths, and community hubs. Don't get distracted by national politics. Stay grounded in what councils actually do and what your neighbours care about.

5. Keep It Simple

Choose 2–3 clear priorities and be able to say them in one line. Stick to messages that resonate with a wide range of voters. For example: "Better footpaths. Less waste. More say for locals."

6. Use What You've Got

You don't need a big budget. A good message, a flyer, a Facebook page, and a few local champions can go a long way. People want to see candidates who are present and genuine, not polished or overly produced.

7. Know the Role

Understand what councils can and can't do. This builds credibility. Attend a few council meetings or read their recent plans and agendas. You'll stand out as someone who's done their homework.

8. Be Ready to Learn

You won't know it all—and that's okay. Be open to feedback. Ask questions. Keep your focus on what's best for your community, not just what sounds popular.

9. Get Out There (and Stay Cool)

Get talking—in person and online. Be visible at events, markets, sports games, and in your neighbourhood. Stay positive. Treat everyone with respect, even if you disagree.

10. Stick to Your Values

You won't please everyone. That's normal. However, if you stay true to your core values and lead with integrity, people will respect you for it. Remember why you started and let that guide you.



Running local. Think local.
Leading with heart and common sense. You've got this.



STAND



11 CANDIDATE TALKING POINTS

A quick-reference guide for candidates who want to stand up for local democracy, common sense, and community-first priorities.

Use these as talking points at public meetings, in interviews, or when writing your candidate bio or flyers. Adapt them to your voice and add local examples where possible.

Rates & Spending

- Ratepayers deserve better value for money. I support keeping rates at or below inflation and reviewing all “nice-to-have” spending.
- We need fewer consultants and vision documents — and more delivery.
- I’ll advocate for responsible budgets focused on core services and cost-benefit analysis.

Council Debt

- Ballooning council debt is unsustainable.
- I’ll push for a review of borrowing policies and support tighter debt controls.
- Ratepayers shouldn’t be stuck paying interest on vanity projects for decades.

Roads, Parking & Local Access

- I support walking and cycling where it makes sense — but not at the expense of car access, especially in town centres.
- Removing car parks and narrowing roads without consultation hurts local businesses and families.
- I’ll advocate for balanced transport planning that protects freedom of movement.

Infrastructure Neglect

- It’s time to get back to basics: roads, drains, footpaths, water.
- I’ll prioritise core infrastructure over costly trials and branding exercises.
- Ratepayers should see tangible improvements — not just glossy strategies.

Water Control

- “Local Water Done Well” still feels like central control in disguise.
- I support genuine local ownership of water assets and full transparency on service plans.
- Communities should be consulted before big decisions are made.

Fluoride Without Consent

- Health mandates must respect local views.
- I support holding a public vote before fluoride is added to our water.
- One-size-fits-all health policy should not override community consent.

Core Services

- Core services must come first. That means roads, rubbish, water, and parks — not endless “strategy” reports.
- I’ll fight to protect frontline services from budget cuts and bloated admin.
- Ratepayers expect the basics to be done well — and so do I.

Democracy & Representation

- I believe in democratic decision-making
- Every councillor should be elected and accountable.
- I’ll oppose appointments that bypass the public, and defend local representation.

Climate Change & Managed Retreat

- We need practical resilience — not panic policies. We need fewer models telling us what will happen in 100 years and more focus on practical steps to protect communities’ assets now.
- I’ll oppose forced managed retreat and support property rights and voluntary solutions.
- Climate planning should reflect local input, not top-down ideology.

Digital Surveillance

- Tech can help — but not at the cost of freedom or privacy.
- I’ll demand transparency around Smart City programmes and oppose surveillance without opt-in consent.
- Councils must be upfront about any biometric or digital ID initiatives.

Urban Overreach / 15-Minute Cities

- Local living is great — when it’s voluntary.
- I’ll push back against planning tools that restrict movement or centralise control.
- Community-led growth beats top-down zoning every time.

STAND



12 PLAYING BY THE RULES

Why It Matters

Running a clean, compliant campaign isn't just about legal boxes—it shows voters you respect the process and take public trust seriously. The rules are simpler than they seem once you get the basics down.

Following the rules isn't just compliance—it's credibility. Independent candidates often stand for fairness, integrity, and transparency—so show it in how you run.



1. Know Your Spending Limit

Every candidate has a strict spending cap based on local population size

- Small wards: around \$3,500
- Large city wards/mayoral races: up to \$30,000+
- Ask your local Electoral Officer to confirm your exact limit.
- Your limit covers all campaign costs between nomination day and election day, including:
 - Posters, flyers, signs
 - Social media ads and websites
 - Events and venue hire
 - Merchandise (badges, t-shirts, etc.)
 - Printing, design, and advertising
 - Donations or freebies (must be declared—are they costed?)

2. Keep Good Records

You must file a campaign expenditure return after the election—even if you spent nothing.

Keep track of:

- All receipts and quotes
- Donation records
- Volunteer time (if services are usually paid)
- If someone donates more than \$1,500, you must declare it.

3. Get Support if You Need It

Not sure what counts as campaign spending?

Ask your local electoral officer.

They're there to help—better to ask early than get caught out.

Helpful Resources for Candidates

Electoral Commission – Candidate Handbook
www.vote.nz/2025-local-elections/candidates/handbooks

Spending Limits Law

Electoral (Expenditure Limit) Order 2024

Auckland Council Campaigning Guidelines

governance.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Vote Auckland – Campaign Tips

voteauckland.co.nz



Play it straight.
Build trust. Lead with integrity.
You've got this.



HELP
OUT



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SUPPORT
YOUR CANDIDATE

1. Understand the Local Election System

- Timing: Local elections are held every three years (next: 2025).
- Who runs: Candidates stand for councils (district, city, or regional), local and community boards, DHBs (now largely absorbed by Health NZ), and licensing trusts.
- Voting system: Depends on the council – First Past the Post (FPP) or Single Transferable Vote (STV).
- Voting: By postal ballot, usually in September–October.

2. Know Your Candidate

- **Understand their:**
 - ◊ Key policies and values
 - ◊ Electorate and demographic
 - ◊ Strengths and weaknesses
 - ◊ Backstory and community ties
 - ◊ Be able to clearly articulate:
 - ◊ “Why this candidate? Why now?”

3. Spread the Word

- Word of Mouth: Still the most trusted source—talk to neighbours, friends, and local groups.
- **Social Media:**
 - ◊ Share posts, tag local pages/groups
 - ◊ Use local hashtags and community noticeboards
 - ◊ Encourage candidate Q&A livestreams or short videos
 - ◊ Endorsements: Secure and share support from well-known locals, respected organisations, or community figures.

4. Support the Campaign Infrastructure

- **Volunteer:**
 - ◊ Door knocking
 - ◊ Leaflet drops
 - ◊ Market stalls
 - ◊ Street corner waving
- **Fundraise:**
 - ◊ Host small events or online fundraisers
 - ◊ Promote donation links
- **Donate Skills:**
 - ◊ Graphic design, photography, copywriting
 - ◊ Admin or legal support
 - ◊ Data management

5. Help with Events

- **Organise or support:**
 - ◊ Public meetings, debates, meet-the-candidate events
 - ◊ Community BBQs, town hall gatherings
 - ◊ Stall presence at local fairs and markets
 - ◊ Promote events across networks and platforms

6. Maximise Voter Turnout

- Remind people to enrol and update details on the [Electoral Commission website](#).
- Educate on how postal voting works and key dates.
- **Offer:**
 - ◊ Rides to the post box
 - ◊ Ballot reminders via text/social media
 - ◊ Translate and explain materials for non-native English speakers in your community.

7. Use Data Strategically

- Identify key communities and turnout targets.
- Track conversations and support levels using tools like NationBuilder, spreadsheets, or CRMs.
- Prioritise outreach in low-turnout suburbs and among younger voters.

8. Know the Rules

- Respect Electoral Commission guidelines and local council rules around signage, donations, advertising, and spending limits.
- All ads and promotional materials must include authorisation statements.
- Avoid unsubstantiated comments or personal attacks—stay focused on values, vision, and leadership.

9. Stay Positive, Real, and Local

- Be authentic and community-focused.
- Talk about issues that matter locally: roads, transport, water, parks, libraries, local democracy.
- Show the candidate’s commitment to listening and serving.

HELP OUT

14 QUESTIONS TO ASK AT CANDIDATE MEETINGS

Use these short intros and questions to inform the room, hold candidates to account, and encourage others to think critically.

Tip: Add in your local knowledge to make your questions hit harder — mention your town's recent rate rises, roadworks, zoning changes, or smart city trials.

Rates & Spending

Preamble: Rates are going up year after year, but services are getting worse. It seems more money is being spent on consultants and strategy documents than on actual delivery.

Questions to Ask:

- What specific projects or departments would you cut or scale back to keep rates under control?
- Will you commit to keeping rate rises at or below inflation?
- How will you ensure spending is focused on real services, not bureaucracy?

Council Debt

Preamble: Many councils are now servicing huge debts — and ratepayers are left paying interest on past overspending.

Questions to Ask:

- What's your view on current council debt levels, and would you support a cap or review of borrowing?
- How will you reduce council reliance on debt?
- What safeguards would you support to prevent future debt blowouts?

Roads, Parking & Local Access

Preamble: Car parks are disappearing. Roads are narrowing. Town centres are harder to access, especially for older people and families.

Questions to Ask:

- Do you support removing car parks or limiting vehicle access in the name of urban design or climate goals?
- What is your view on bike lanes replacing vehicle lanes or parking in busy town centres?
- How will you ensure locals can still access shops, services, and public spaces by car?

Infrastructure Neglect

Preamble: Our footpaths are cracked, drains are blocked, and roads are falling apart — yet millions go to rebrands and “visioning.”

Questions to Ask:

- How much of the council's budget currently goes to maintenance and upgrades?
- Will you prioritise fixing basic infrastructure over new “placemaking” projects?
- What specific steps will you take to address our town's maintenance backlog?

Water Control

Preamble: “Local Water Done Well” is the new name for Three Waters, but it still involves heavy regulation and central oversight.

Questions to Ask:

- Will you support true local control of water — including public consultation on major decisions?
- What is your position on water service delivery plans and compliance targets?
- How will you protect our community's voice in future water decisions?

Fluoride Without Consent

Preamble: Councils are being forced/mandated to add fluoride to water supplies without asking the public.

Questions to Ask:

- Will you support holding a local referendum; to remove the current addition of fluoride and/or to STOP fluoride being added to local town water supplies?
- What is your view on central government mandates for community health measures?
- Do you believe public health decisions should be made locally or nationally?

Core Services

Preamble: We keep hearing about strategic frameworks and long-term visions, but people just want the basics done well.

Questions to Ask:

- Will you commit to prioritising roads, rubbish, and water over vision documents?
- How do you define a “core service” — and how will you defend its funding?
- What would you cut first if the council needed to rein in spending?

Democracy & Representation

Preamble: More and more decision-making is happening behind closed doors or by unelected panels.

Questions to Ask:

- Do you support full elected representation for all council roles?
- Will you oppose co-governance or appointments without a vote?
- How will you ensure council processes remain open and democratic?

Climate Change & Managed Retreat

Preamble: The ‘Climate Change’ narrative is being used to justify planning restrictions, levies, and even forced relocation.

Questions to Ask:

- What's your position on managed retreat — and should it ever be mandatory?
- Will you support property rights and community input in climate planning?
- Do you think climate policies should be flexible or top-down?
- Do you think our Councils, Local Boards & Community Boards should be wasting our taxpayer money, by adding a ‘Climate impact statement’ to every meeting agenda items? Is this another global agenda being forced by our Government on our councils?

Digital Surveillance

Preamble: Councils are trialling Smart City tech — facial recognition, smart poles, biometric ID — often with no consultation.

Questions to Ask:

- Is our council involved in any digital surveillance or smart tech trials?
- Will you commit to requiring consultation and opt-in for surveillance programmes?
- What is your position on digital privacy and council data sharing?

Urban Overreach / 15-Minute Cities

Preamble: The “15-minute city” idea sounds nice, but it can also mean restrictive planning and reduced freedom of movement.

Questions to Ask:

- Do you support this model being used in our area — and how will you protect freedom of movement?
- How will you ensure local input is respected in urban planning?
- What's your stance on centralised zoning mandates from Wellington?

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DISCLAIMERS AND SOURCES

Disclaimer: The information provided is for general informational purposes only and should not be considered legal, financial, or professional advice. Rates and property-related charges may vary based on local regulations and individual circumstances. For accurate and up-to-date information, please refer to your local council or a qualified professional.

Climate change policies (Page 9)

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/campaigns/choose-nature-based-solutions#:~:text=Nature%2Dbased%20solutions%20can%20help,outcomes%20for%20people%20and%20nature.>

Earnings (Page 10)

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/519420/how-much-your-local-council-gets-paid>

How to vote (Page 14)

<https://vote.nz>

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/local-government-in-nz/local-elections/voting-in-local-elections>

<https://www.localcouncils.govt.nz>

<https://www.wellington.govt.nz/about-the-council/elections/voting/stv>

<https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/council/electoral-information/how-to-vote>

<https://www.pncc.govt.nz/elections> <https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-council/elections/voting/>

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/your-council/elections/>

<https://www.porirua.govt.nz/your-council/elections/>

<https://mstn.govt.nz/council/elections/>

Can I win an Election (Page 18)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_New_Zealand_local_elections

https://infocouncil.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Open/2024/06/20240620_OR_AGN_11944

[ExternalAttachments/20240620_OR_AGN_11944_Attachment_99911_4.PDF](#)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13597566.2023.2234295>

<https://www.frankie.com.au/article/tamatha-paul-is-the-green-party-candidate-for-wellington-central-599486>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/17/youthquake-the-young-new-zealanders-voted-into-office-in-between-mcdonalds-shifts>

<https://thespinoff.co.nz/local-elections-2022/22-08-2022/238-people-just-won-local-election-seats-weeks-before-the-first-vote-is-cast>

Support your candidate (Page 28)

<https://vote.nz>

<https://www.localcouncils.govt.nz>

<https://www.elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/candidate-handbooks/>

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/vote-2022/information-for-voters/>

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/vote-2022/information-for-candidates/>

<https://www.dia.govt.nz/Local-Elections>

<https://www.elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/nomination-and-campaigning-rules/local-elections-rules/>

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/elections/pages/default.aspx>

<https://www.wellington.govt.nz/your-council/elections>

<https://www.voteauckland.co.nz>



councilwatchnz.co.nz