

Things to know once you're elected

A collection of thoughts and tips from the 2016/19 Young Elected Members' Committee

Things to know once you're elected



Speak with people who are, or have been, elected members. Find out what's involved in the job, and what you'll be doing.



Don't try and predict the length of a meeting off the length of an agenda. A short agenda can still mean a long meeting.



Meeting times aren't always set in stone. Think about how you'll manage this with your other commitments (e.g. family, work).



It is okay to ask for help, from other members of your council, and from other elected members around the country. Look them up online, reach out.



Additional meetings can crop up during the course of the year, such as hearings, deliberation meetings or extraordinary meetings. Flag with your employer early that you may need to attend irregular, ad hoc meetings at last minute.



Election of a community board chairperson, or the chairperson of a committee you might sit on, will likely happen at the first meeting you go to. Do some homework on the other members of your community board or committee before the first meeting.



You should expect peaks and troughs in your workload. There will be busy times – for example when deliberating on the Long Term Plan – and some quieter times as well.



Find out what relationship or engagement you can have with council staff, and the parameters of that relationship, early. Staff can be an invaluable point of contact.



As a councillor or community board member you'll be responsible for making decisions on a range of things; not just the issue you might have chosen to campaign on.



Local Government New Zealand provides support networks for elected members, including Māori elected members, young elected members and the members of community boards.



Decisions will be made not long after you've been elected about the various portfolio responsibilities that you might pick up, or committees you might sit on. Give some thought to which appeal to you.



Professional development as an elected member is important. Local Government New Zealand offers professional development opportunities for all elected members.



As an elected member, you will be considered an independent contractor for tax purposes. That means you'll be responsible for paying your own taxes; the council won't do it for you.



Find out from council staff what the policy and process for expense claims is. You might, for example, in some instances be able to have your travel expenses reimbursed.



Find out your obligations to pay taxes, ACC levies and student loan repayments early.



As an elected member, your role is a governance role. The Chief Executive and council staff are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organisation.



Find out from council staff what IT resources you will be provided with. Not all councils provide their elected members with technology or allowances for internet or phone use.



There are Standing Orders and other procedures which will govern the meetings you attend. Once you're elected do some background reading and become familiar with these.



You'll be invited to a lot of meetings. Attending meetings is important, but you can prioritise which ones you need to be at.



Any communications you receive or send can be requested by members of the public under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). Even the communications you receive to or send from a personal email address or mobile phone (including via social media platforms), if sent in your capacity as an elected member, can be requested.