



# 2020 Election Period Councillor Guidance

## Election Period Key Dates

Thursday 17 September – Opening of Nomination Period

Tuesday 22 September – Close of Nomination Period and Ballot Draw to determine ballot paper order

Tuesday 12.00pm 22 September to Friday 6.00pm 23 October – Election Period (formerly known as Caretaker Period)

Saturday 24 October – Election Day

Sunday 25 October to Friday 13 November – Declaration of Polls (the VEC have advised polls could be declared as late as 13 November due to Covid-19 implications and Australia Post delays.)

## Mandatory Training

The mandatory Local Government Candidate Training (through LGV) is now available and can be accessed from the following link;

<https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance/candidate-training>

*Councillors who are re-standing must complete the training before they are able to nominate.*

## Candidate Handbook

The 2020 candidate handbook is a one-stop shop of information for prospective candidates, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/files/Local%20Government%202020%20-%20Candidate%20Handbook%20Postal.pdf>

A safe Campaigning Guideline has been provided and outlines activities that can and can't be undertaken during Stage 3 restrictions:

[https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0033/484098/Safe-Campaign-Guidelines-Aug-20.pdf](https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0033/484098/Safe-Campaign-Guidelines-Aug-20.pdf)

## Confidential Information

Councillors when campaigning (and retiring) are reminded that they are privy to confidential information. They must not use this information in campaigning either formally or informally. This is an offense under Section 77 of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

(1) A person who is, or has been, a Councillor or a member of a special committee, must not disclose information that the person knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

Penalty: 120 penalty units.



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## Information from the Chief Municipal Inspector

### Be social media aware

The following information was in the latest publication from the Acting Chief Municipal Inspector *The 2016 elections saw 2,135 candidates nominating for 637 vacancies. During this period, the Inspectorate received 2,000 enquiries and 409 formal complaints about matters ranging from minor campaign material breaches to serious corruption allegations for activities designed to undermine the integrity of the democratic process.*

*Many enquiries related to social media posts and the complaints team processed 78 formal complaints on this topic. There was a 43% increase between 2012 and 2016 in complaints about the authorisation of election material, with 40% of all issues raised in this category related to content that was published online.*

*The Inspectorate expects the 2020 data to reveal a further increase in complaints about social media activities by candidates and sitting Councillors. As COVID-19 restrictions have impacted on traditional street campaigning, candidates will increasingly turn to email and social media to advocate for local issues and in some cases, conduct misinformation or 'attack' campaigns against rival candidates.*

## Use of Placards and Signs

Candidates are advised that a permit is generally required to display election placards on roads or public spaces. Placards come under the definition of an advertising sign in Council's Local Law. Queries on the use or placement of placards should be directed to Council's Community Safety Manager.

## Council branding and digital assets

During the election period, Councillors cannot use any Council branding, or Council digital assets (i.e photo's, website content etc).



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## Digital communication

During the election period, Councillors are unable to:

- use their Councillor social media channels. It is recommended that you turn off comments so that no one can comment on your Councillor social media accounts. Personal social media accounts are allowed.

Council's social media channels and Council's website will be adjusted by the removal of Councillor profiles and photo's – contact details will remain.

Council social media posts and website updates will function with CEO certification.

## Media releases and enquiries

All media enquiries will be managed by the Communications team in conjunction with the CEO or relevant Director.

Councillors are unable to:

- speak or comment to the media or represent Council during the election period.
- have photos taken as a Councillor that are featured in media channels

Media releases are unable to have references to or any photos of Councillors. Where necessary, any quotes will be from CEO only.

All BBSC media releases will include a CEO certification statement.

Media briefings may continue with the CEO only, not the Mayor.

Development of speeches by Council staff aren't allowed.

All Council advertisements and public notices (road closures, meetings etc), will be certified by CEO.

Councillor Snapshot fortnightly newsletter will cease from 22 September and will resume with new Council.



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## Council Equipment and Supplies

### Laptops/Devices/Mobile Phones

For Councillors who are not nominating you can return your electronic devices on or before Friday 23 October, 2020. These can be dropped off to Governance at Civic Place, Warragul.

For Councillors who are renominating you ***will not*** be required to return your devices during the election period. You are reminded that it is against VEC policy to use your Council devices, email address, Councillor social media page to undertake campaigning. This includes your Council issued mobile phone.

### Equipment and Stationery

Any Councillor who is not returned or not nominating must return to Council any Council branded stationery or clothing, name badges, PPE or other equipment.

Any copies of confidential briefing papers (reports or attachments) should be returned to Governance for secure shredding.

*For Councillors who are not returned you will be required to return your devices, equipment and supplies within one week of the declaration of polls.*

## Communicating with the organisation

There will be times during the election period where you need information / make a request to perform your role and function as a Councillor. Standard requests (pothole etc.) can still flow through the CRM system, however, any other request should be made to a Director or the CEO and will also be managed through the CRM system.

Any requests for information deemed to be for election purposes will be referred to the Governance team for determination, and dissemination to all candidates, if appropriate.

## Post Declaration Formalities

Council Meetings will be scheduled as soon as possible after the Declaration to cover:

- Swearing in Ceremony
- Signing of Code of Conduct
- Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Appointments to Advisory Committees



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## Additional Resources and Contacts

Specific queries relating to the Elections may need to be directed to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) , the below links may be helpful:

VEC homepage - <https://vec.vic.gov.au>

Candidate information - <https://vec.vic.gov.au/candidates-and-parties/becoming-a-local-council-candidate>

Baw Baw Shire Council profile page - <https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/voting/2020-local-council-election/elections/baw-baw-shire-council>

Or contact Council's Governance Team on 56 24 2411, or [Governance@bawbawshire.vic.gov](mailto:Governance@bawbawshire.vic.gov)