



# **SOLGM Electoral Working Party Newsletter**

## **July 2007**

This newsletter is to update electoral officers on the following election-related topics:

### **1 Electoral Officers' Post-Election Debrief Forum**

A post election debrief forum for electoral officers and other electoral staff will be held:

**Where:** Duxton Hotel  
Wellington  
**When:** Wednesday, 12 December 2007

Full details of the forum will be provided later this year. In the meantime electoral officers are requested to note this date in their diaries.

### **2 Electoral Officers' Fees**

A revised scale of fees for electoral officers has recently been approved by the Presidents of SOLGM and *Local Government New Zealand*. The revised scale of fees (a copy of which is attached) incorporates an increase of 8.8% in each component of the scale, reflecting the CPI increase since the previous scale was issued in July 2004.

The revised Memorandum of Understanding which will apply in respect of this year's DHB elections provides for the payment of separate fees to district health board (DHB) electoral officers, made up of two parts:

- (i) a fixed component of \$7,000;
- (ii) a variable component, being \$75 per 1,000 (or part thereof) valid voting documents received.

### **3 Elections 2007 Logo**

All electoral officers should by now have received an electronic copy of the updated vote! logo to be included in the candidate information booklets, voting document envelopes and publicity associated with this year's elections. A copy of this logo is set out below.



Please Note: The logo should not be altered in any way – it must either be used as shown, or not used at all.

If you have any queries about this please contact Kirsty Anderson of *Local Government New Zealand* at 04 924 1202 or [kirsty.anderson@lgnz.co.nz](mailto:kirsty.anderson@lgnz.co.nz).

#### **4 Code of Good Practice for the Management of Local Authority Elections and Polls**

The updating of the Code of Good Practice for the Management of the 2007 Local Authority Elections and Polls has now been completed.

The revised code has now been published, and can be accessed by electoral officers on:

[www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz)  
[www.localgovt.co.nz](http://www.localgovt.co.nz) (resource library)

New Vote Processing and Counting Assurance guidelines were separately emailed to all electoral officers on 20 July 2007, and will be inserted as Part 14C in the Code of Good Practice. Please destroy any earlier versions of the guidelines. For more on these guidelines, please see item 10 below.

#### **5 Election Costs Reimbursement Insurance**

Most electoral officers will by now have arranged the usual election costs reimbursement insurance.

DHB and licensing trust electoral officers are reminded that (as in 2004) they should consider arranging separate insurance cover for the DHB and/or licensing trust elections, should this be agreed with the relevant DHBs and/or licensing trust. Such insurance can be arranged through an insurance broker such as Jardine Lloyd Thompson. In addition, licensing trust and regional council electoral officers should also consider arranging separate insurance cover where regional council and/or licensing trust areas straddle a number of territorial authorities.

#### **6 Memoranda of Understanding for Regional Council, Licensing Trust and District Health Board Elections**

The model MOUs for this year's regional council, licensing trust and DHB elections have now been finalised, and are included in Part 3 of the Code of Good Practice.

The revised MOUs can be modified as required by agreement between the parties involved.

#### **7 Apportionment of Election Costs**

In 2004, separate cost sharing arrangements applied in respect of the territorial authority, regional council, DHB and licensing trust elections. A common formula for apportioning election costs has been included in the model MOUs to be used for the regional council, DHB and licensing trust elections in 2007, which will enable the same template to be used for apportioning the election costs for all issues.

The cost sharing spreadsheet template will be emailed to all electoral officers in the next week or so.

#### **8 Format of Candidate Profile Statements**

The working party has recently held further discussions with Datamail concerning the layout of profile statements submitted by candidates.

As a result of these discussions, electoral officers are requested to advise candidates that profile statements should be submitted in plain text, although they can be divided into separate paragraphs with no line space between paragraphs. However, candidates should not use other layouts involving the use of bullet points etc, as these will need to be converted to plain text to ensure each candidate's profile statement is accorded approximately the same amount of space in the candidate profile booklets, sent out with the voting documents.

## 9 Format of Voting Documents

The Secretary for Local Government has now approved the general formats of the voting documents to be used in 2007. The new formats are a vast improvement on some of the voting documents used in 2004, and make a much clearer distinction between FPP and STV issues where both electoral systems are used on combined voting documents.

The approved voting documents will soon be available for viewing on-line via; [www.dia.govt.nz](http://www.dia.govt.nz).

All election service providers and mailhouses associated with the 2007 elections have made arrangements for the voting documents to be set up and produced using the new formats.

Although the approved formats provide for the words describing the number of candidates above each issue to be shown in lower case, the working party recommends that the words stating the number of candidates are bolded when the relevant details are entered in the election software, eg:

Christchurch City Council  
Election of **TWO (2)** Councillors for the Fendalton-Waimari Ward

## 10 Processing and Counting Assurance

The Minister of Local Government has advised that it is not the Government's intention to proceed with regulations relating to election software and manual processes for vote processing and counting. On this basis the working party strongly recommends adoption of its 'Vote Processing and Counting Assurance' guidelines circulated on 20 July to electoral officers. The guidelines recommend independent testing of election software as being 'fit for purpose' in relation to the elections at which it is to be used, and engagement of an auditor to report on end-to-end business processes as similarly 'fit for purpose'. While there will not be mandatory regulations, the working party believes there will be keen public and media interest in these elections and all possible steps should be taken to ensure accurate and timely election results are able to be produced for all elections, both FPP and STV.

This is an opportunity for the sector to demonstrate it can self-regulate its affairs by voluntarily adopting good practice professional standards, in an area where maintenance of public confidence is absolutely vital given democratic imperatives and also increasing use of technology.

## 11 Progress Results on Election Day

The working party has also discussed the issue of progress results, prior to the release of the preliminary results.

It is expected that in most cases the preliminary results for FPP issues will be available on election day. Electoral officers may wish to consider the release of progress results for FPP elections at anytime after close of voting at 12 noon on election day.

In many cases, the preliminary results for the STV issue or issues will also be available on election day. However, where significant delays in issuing STV preliminary results may occur (eg, not available until Sunday 14 October, or early the following week) then the working party recommends that progress STV results be announced from 12 noon on Sunday 14 October. These progress results will need to have the necessary cautions placed around them (eg that a change to the result is very possible) and list the percentage of the overall vote counted. In the case of a DHB whose boundaries straddle a number of territorial authority boundaries, the progress results should also (where practicable) quote the percentage of each constituent territorial authority's voting documents included in the progress result.

## **12 Updated Population Statistics**

For the purposes of electoral expenses, section 104 of the Local Electoral Act provides that "population" means the population, as at the day that is three months before the close of polling day, of a local government area as specified in a certificate issued in respect of that area by the Government Statistician.

At the request of the working party, the Department of Statistics has contacted individual electoral officers to establish their requirements in this respect. Updated population statistics can be of particular importance in areas experiencing rapid growth, as the updated population figures may result in higher candidate expenditure limits applying in the case of some cities, wards, communities, regions, DHB districts or subdivisions thereof.

Where a Council has contracted out the entire election to a service provider, the updated statistics will be supplied direct to the service provider.

## **13 Advertising: Ordering of Candidates' Names on Voting Documents**

Clause 31(4) of the Local Electoral Regulations provides that if a local authority has determined that the candidates' names will be arranged in pseudo-random order on the voting documents, the electoral officer must state, in the public notice given under section 65(1) of the Act, the date, time and place at which the order of the candidates' names will be arranged, and any person is entitled to attend.

The working party has discussed the practical difficulties this could cause, in that where pseudo-random order is used, the arrangement needs to be decided as soon as possible following the close of nominations, to enable a start to be made on the production of the voting documents. To overcome this practical difficulty, the working party therefore recommends that:

- details of the date, time and place at which the pseudo-random order is to be determined are included in the public notice required to be given by no later than Friday 27 July, giving public notice of the election, calling for nominations, and advising that the roll is open for inspection;
- the arrangement takes place on the afternoon of Friday 24 August 2007 (ie straight after the close of nominations);
- details of when and where the arrangement took place also be included in the subsequent public notice of the day of the election listing the candidates' names and other details, given under section 65 of the Act.

#### **14 Lodgement of Election Information on Local Government Online**

Electoral officers are requested to supply Local Government Online with details of nominations, immediately following the close of nominations. Similarly, LGOL should also be supplied with details of both the preliminary and official election results. Part 20 of the Code of Good Practice sets out the recommended good practice for the supply of this information, and the email address of the LGOL web manager ([web@localgovt.co.nz](mailto:web@localgovt.co.nz)).

#### **15 Public Communications by Local Authorities During the Pre-Election Period**

Electoral officers are reminded of the good practice guidelines for managing public communications by local authorities issued by the Controller and Auditor General in April 2004. These guidelines refer in particular to communications during the pre-election period, and the need to ensure that such communications must not be seen as promoting, or perceived to be promoting the re-election prospects of sitting members. A copy of this publication can be accessed via; [www.oag.govt.nz/2004/public-communications/](http://www.oag.govt.nz/2004/public-communications/)

#### **16 Appointment of Justices of the Peace**

To be eligible for appointment as a Justice of the Peace to observe the processing of voting documents under Section 82 of the Local Electoral Act, a JP must be nominated by a member of the Royal Federation of the New Zealand Justices' Association (Inc). A list of local JP's Associations can be accessed via; [www.JPFed.org.nz](http://www.JPFed.org.nz)

#### **17 Managing Unforeseen Difficulties Which Might Arise on Election Day**

The working party strongly recommends that electoral officers (or their election service providers) have plans in place for dealing with any unforeseen problems that might arise on election day. The Code of Good Practice will be augmented in the next few weeks to provide some advice on the recommended components such plans should contain.

Regards



Peter Guerin  
Chairperson  
SOLGM Electoral Working Party