



REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026

Re: Employee Elections and Political Conduct Policy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Council adopt Policy No. 24-ADMIN, Elections Conduct Policy.
2. That Council refers the Policy No. 24-ADMIN to the Central Saanich Police Board for their consideration of similar policy for their administration.

PURPOSE:

To bring forward the proposed draft *District of Central Saanich Employee Elections and Political Conduct Policy* (Policy) as previously requested by Council.

BACKGROUND:

On February 9, 2026, Council endorsed the following resolution:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to prepare and present for Council consideration a policy governing the participation of municipal employees and contractors in local election activities, including individuals under the purview of the Central Saanich Police Board, with particular emphasis on:

1. *Prohibiting the use of municipal positions, authority, resources, confidential information, or influence—whether real or perceived—to benefit any candidate, slate, or political initiative in a local election;*
2. *Clarifying expectations and limitations regarding political activity during working hours, while in uniform, or while otherwise representing the municipality;*
3. *Providing guidance to ensure compliance with applicable legislation, collective agreements, and principles of freedom of expression, while protecting the municipality's obligation to remain politically neutral;*
4. *Establishing clear consequences and accountability mechanisms for breaches of the policy; and*
5. *Ensuring the policy is communicated effectively to all employees, contractors, and affected boards.*

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff consult, as appropriate, with legal counsel, human resources, and relevant boards or commissions in the development of the proposed policy, and report back to Council within a reasonable timeframe.

At Council's direction, staff have undertaken the development of a draft Policy to provide clear guidance regarding employee participation in election-related activities and to support the District's obligation to remain politically neutral during election periods.

The proposed Policy is intended to balance employees’ rights to participate in the democratic process with the District’s responsibility to maintain public confidence in the impartiality of its administration and the appropriate use of municipal resources. Following Council’s direction, Corporate and Human Resource staff have reviewed legislative requirements, sector practices, other jurisdictional examples, and existing policy frameworks within the District in the development of this draft Policy.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed Policy (Key Principles and Scope: Table 1) seeks to strike an appropriate balance between employees’ rights, as citizens, to participate in the democratic process, and the District’s obligation to maintain a professional, politically impartial public service.

While employees are entitled to hold personal political views and engage in political activities on their own time, the nature of local government requires that municipal services, advice, and decision-making be delivered—and be perceived to be delivered—without political bias. Clear expectations regarding political activity, use of District resources, and circumstances involving candidacy or elected office help protect public confidence in the integrity of the organization, reduce the risk of real or perceived conflicts, and provide staff and management with consistent, transparent guidance during election periods. The policy is intended to support both individual rights and institutional integrity by clarifying responsibilities before issues arise, rather than responding to concerns on a case-by-case basis.

The draft Policy outlines how employees can participate in political activities while ensuring public service impartiality and protecting the integrity of the District’s operations.

Table 1. Key principles and scope of the draft Policy.

Topic	Details
Scope and definitions	Policy applies to all District employees including permanent, temporary, casual, auxiliary firefighters; contractors and volunteers subject to certain provisions. Political activity includes supporting candidates or parties, seeking nominations or elected positions, campaigning on referendum questions.
Restrictions on political activities	Employees must not use District resources for political purposes, engage in political activities during work hours or on-call time (except voting), wear District-branded clothing while engaging in political activities, or imply District endorsement of any political entity or referendum stance.
Balancing rights and impartiality	Employees have the right to engage in political activities on their own time, must maintain political neutrality for impartial and professional municipal services. Officers with higher risk of conflicts have stricter standards.
Election candidacy and office holding	Employees running for Central Saanich Council must take unpaid leave from nomination filing to voting day, suspended access to District resources. Those elected to Central Saanich Council or the CRD must resign. Employees elected to other public bodies may receive leave or duty modifications subject to approval and operational needs. Conflicts of interest must be avoided.

The development of this draft Policy is not driven by any specific incident or identified compliance issue, but rather reflects a proactive governance approach. While existing practices and professional standards

have generally been effective, the policy provides clarity and consistency in advance of future election periods and supports shared understanding should circumstances arise.

Central Saanich Police Services

Council directed staff to direct staff to “prepare and present for Council consideration a policy governing the participation of municipal employees and contractors in local election activities, *including individuals under the purview of the Central Saanich Police Board*”. Under the Police Act, municipal Council does not have the authority to direct policing policy, operations, or service delivery. This limitation is intentional and foundational to the legislation, ensuring a clear separation between political governance and independent policing. The Police Board is the designated civilian oversight body responsible for setting policing policy, priorities, and service levels.

As a best practice, staff are recommending a referral of this policy as a best practice to the Police Board, which is legislatively empowered to consider, interpret, and implement such direction within its governance role, while maintaining the operational independence of the Chief Constable.

IMPLICATIONS:

Strategic

The Policy supports the District’s strategic objectives related to good governance, organizational integrity, and public trust by reinforcing political neutrality and clear accountability during election periods.

Legislative/Policy

The policy aligns with the District’s authority under the *Community Charter* to regulate employee conduct and complements existing codes of conduct and conflict-of-interest provisions by providing specific guidance related to election-period activities.

The Police Act prohibits municipal Councils from directing policing policy, operations, or service delivery to maintain independent policing. The Police Board, as the civilian oversight body, sets policy, priorities, and service levels.

Financial/ Resource

There are no direct financial implications associated with the adoption of this policy, as it provides guidance and expectations within existing administrative and human resource frameworks.

Legal/HR

The proposed policy clarifies expectations, supports consistent application, and reduces risk by balancing employee rights with the District’s duty to maintain an impartial public service and avoid real or perceived conflicts.

Communications

Once adopted, the policy will be communicated internally to employees and management to ensure awareness and understanding prior to the next general local election period.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

1. That Council adopt Policy No. ADMIN-24, Employee Elections and Political Conduct Policy.

2. That Council refers the Policy No. ADMIN-24 to the Central Saanich Police Board for their consideration of similar policy for their administration.

Option 2:

That Council provide additional direction on the Employee Elections and Political Conduct Policy to be incorporated and returned for further consideration.

Option 3:

That Council chose to not adopt an Employee Elections and Political Conduct Policy at this time.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed *District of Central Saanich Employee Election and Political Conduct Policy* provides clear, consistent guidance that supports employees' democratic rights while safeguarding the District's obligation to remain politically impartial. Adoption of the policy will strengthen organizational clarity, reduce risk, and support public confidence in the integrity of municipal administration during election periods.

Respectfully written and submitted by:	Emilie Gorman, Director of Corporate Services/Corporate Officer
Concurrence by:	Nadine Dillabaugh, Manager of HR and Organizational Development
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Policy ADMIN-24, Employee Election and Political Conduct Policy