Comments by Candidates and Our Analysis

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How we approached the analysis

To keep this analysis consistent and fair, we used ChatGPT to help categorise the comments. As a Large Language Model, it applies the same criteria across all statements without personal bias, ensuring that each comment was assessed against the same standard. Where comments could reasonably fall into both categories — scrutiny and personal — we leaned toward the more conservative interpretation, coding them as **Personal**. This approach avoids overstating governance-based debate and ensures the results err on the side of balance and fairness.

How comments were classified

To understand the tone of debate, we divided every comment into one of two categories: **Scrutiny** or **Personal**.

Scrutiny

Comments were classified as **Scrutiny** when they:

- Focused on **process, governance, or evidence**.
- Pointed to issues like timing, legality, compliance with guidance (e.g., OAG or LGNZ rules), or the role of council versus staff.
- Critiqued decisions or actions without attributing motives or questioning character.

Examples:

- "Council should hit pause on the recruitment process."
- "Suggesting the Mayor controls recruitment distorts reality and undermines public confidence."
- "OAG guidance required consulting the full Council, not a select few on a committee with no mandate."

These comments challenge *what was done* or *how it was done* rather than *why it was done* or *what kind of person did it.*

Personal

Comments were classified as **Personal** when they:

- Questioned **motives, intent, or character**.
- Suggested someone acted for personal gain, was deliberately misleading, or had poor leadership qualities.
- Attacked behaviour or personality traits, rather than decisions or processes.

Examples:

- "Councillors who thrive on conflict."
- "She will undermine the very organisation she is meant to help govern."
- "John Glover is incapable of building a team."
- "Lewers is a dangerous choice for Mayor."

These comments don't just dispute a decision; they challenge the *person* behind it.

Borderline cases

Some comments contained **both elements** — for example:

- "Not following process" (scrutiny) paired with "for her own gain" (personal).
- "Talk of a shadowy process is false" (scrutiny) paired with "and irresponsible" (personal).

In these cases, we conservatively coded the comment as **Personal** to avoid overstating scrutiny-based debate. The one exception was a comment from Councillor Gladding that contained two distinct clauses:

- "Blatant disregard for democratic process" → Scrutiny
- "Dangerous choice for Mayor" → Personal

Because each part stood on its own, we split it into two separate comments.

The comments we analysed are all below.

How each comment was categorised

Glyn Lewers Comments

Comment (excerpt)	Category	Explanation
Niki "knows this, yet chooses to ignore the facts."	Personal	Attributes intent, not governance.
Accused her of "aiding a third party in legal proceedings using confidential information."	Personal	Serious impropriety allegation.
Statements were "misleading," "irresponsible," and "designed to disrupt."	Personal	Accuracy + intent → coded personal.
Claimed there has been "taking the moral high ground" and turning issues into a "scandal."	Personal	Motive/behaviour critique.
"Relitigating… shows again… the cost to ratepayers of an individual's crusade."	Personal	Frames actions as a crusade.
Said she had "caused major disruption."	Personal	Intent attributed.
Comments would "undermine the organisation she is meant to help govern."	Personal	Intent attribute.
Criticised her for "disrespecting fellow elected members."	Personal	Character critique.
Accused her of "not following process" and "undermining confidence for her own gain."	**Borderline → Personal**	Process + motive → coded personal.
Said John Glover was "unable to listen and consider all views."	Personal	Character/ability.
Said John Glover was "incapable of building a team."	Personal	Character/ability.
CE procurement concerns were "misleading… irresponsible… designed to disrupt."	Personal	Process + intent → coded personal.
Niki Gladding is "unwilling to accept collective decisions" and substitutes "personal crusades for good governance."	Personal	Character/motives.
"The information shared has been inaccurate and misleading."	Scrutiny	Accuracy only.
In conflict-of-interest questions, she took "the 'moral high ground'" and turned "it into a 'scandal'."	Personal	Motive/behaviour critique.
Demonstrated that "if her individual views are not adhered to, she will undermine the organisation… undermining confidence for her own gain."	**Borderline → Personal**	Process + motive → coded personal.

Lisa Guy Comments

Comment (excerpt)	Category	Explanation
Allegations of impropriety were "unfounded and inappropriate."	Personal	Dismisses legitimacy.
Dismissed criticisms as "political theatrics."	Personal	Frames motives/intent.
Referred to "councillors who thrive on conflict."	Personal	Character attack.
Allegations were "inaccurate and outside the standards of respectful governance."	Scrutiny	Accuracy+ governancel.
Councillors misrepresenting process for "political gain" undermine trust.	Personal	Motive = personal.
Suggesting the Mayor controls recruitment "distorts reality and undermines confidence."	Scrutiny	Governance/process only.
Attempts to relitigate Lakeview were a waste of time.	Scrutiny	Governance/efficiency critique.
Behaviour was "not the marks of a team player."	Personal	Behavioural critique.
"Not the time for councillors who undermine confidence."	Personal	Intent/motives.
Talk of a "shadowy process" was "false and irresponsible."	**Borderline → Personal**	False = scrutiny, irresponsible = intent.
Voters should ask "who is fuelling mistrust with half-truths."	Personal	Motives.
"Hallmarks of a councillor unwilling to accept collective decisions… thrive on conflict."	Personal	Character judgement.

Niki Gladding Comments

Comment (excerpt)	Category	Explanation
Inexperienced councillors might be "relaxed" about recruiter risk.	Scrutiny	Governance.
"People don't understand the risks."	Scrutiny	Risk/process.
Fewer people value "strong democratic process."	Scrutiny	General governance.
"Perception that the Mayor is steering" recruitment.	Scrutiny	Governance/optics.

Comment (excerpt)	Category	Explanation
Integrity of process undermined by "the Mayor's poor leadership" with mistakes often due to incompetence but "on occasion deliberate."	Personal	Crosses into leadership and intent.
Lewers' track record showed "little regard for good process."	Scrutiny	Governance critique.
"Blatant disregard for democratic process."	Scrutiny	Governance critique.
"Dangerous choice for Mayor."	Personal	Electability/character.
Questioned how staff/Mayor could have "got this wrong" on delegations.	Scrutiny	Governance.
OAG guidance required consulting full council, not "a select few on a committee with no mandate."	Scrutiny	Process critique.
Said there has been a "failure of leadership."	Personal	Leadership critique.

John Glover Comments

Comment (excerpt)	Category	Explanation
Council should "hit pause" on recruitment.	Scrutiny	Governance.
"No one was happy with current leadership."	Personal	General leadership critique.
Newcomers would struggle with "all the secret deals that have gone on."	Personal	Ascribes secrecy/impropriety.
Landing on a consultant without full council was "really concerning."	Scrutiny	Governance.
LGNZ guide "must be used alongside OAG guidance."	Scrutiny	Governance.
Timing was "ill-timed, inappropriate, ill-advised and with bad optics."	Scrutiny	Governance/optics.