



WEST MIDLANDS REGION CHURCHES' FORUM

c/o Birmingham Churches Together
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Preparing for the General Election 2010

The General Election must come before June 3rd 2010.

When it does come, how can Christians - and others - decide on how to vote?

Attending an Election Husting is one way of finding out what candidates' opinions are.

Could the Churches in your area get together to arrange a meeting?

A meeting of regional representatives from the West Midlands Region Churches Forum met on 3 March to identify questions they would ask prospective candidates at a locally organised Election Husting. They developed questions based on themes which they considered to be particularly important for the West Midlands. Their work is offered as a resource for Christians attending Election Hustings in the region.

Themes and questions are not listed in a special order or meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. They are offered as 'food for thought' with the intention of eliciting answers from candidates which reveal the values that underpin their rhetoric and policy.

Additionally, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has prepared online resources designed to help groups wanting to set up an Election Husting. These resources include a leaflet outlining the steps needed to organise a Husting and a 'Faith in Politics' booklet with further questions and briefings on important questions of this election campaign. Go to www.churcheselection.org.uk

Migration and Sanctuary

This question explores candidate's understanding and response to the tension between open trade policies which encourage economic migration and border policies aimed at limiting inward migration.

Given the need for fair trade and fair migration policies: how can we fulfil our responsibilities to those individuals and countries who struggle to help themselves, especially individuals fleeing persecution and indebted poor countries?

Although this question can be separated (one relating to migration/sanctuary and a second on fair trade), the single question requires candidates to explore the difference between economic migration and asylum/sanctuary.

Info: www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk www.sanctuarypledge.org.uk www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk

Community

This question is intended to explore candidates' understanding of the complex issues relating to social cohesion/racial/religious harmony.

What are the primary obstacles in the way of creating a harmonious and cohesive society? How do you propose overcoming these obstacles?

Supplementary question:

Can you point to a positive role model for community cohesion?

Society and the Economy

These questions are aimed at finding out the values that drive candidates' economic policy

Equity

Research shows that people experience greater well being in more equal societies: How have concepts of equity influenced your views on the shaping of our economy for the future?

Role of Foreign investment & local and national interest

In light of the recent take over by Kraft of Cadbury's, whilst acknowledging the value of foreign direct investment, how will you ensure that any change of ownership of UK companies takes into account the wider local and national interest and is not solely based on short term financial gains?

Poverty

What is a just way of prioritising spending for the poorest in our communities?

Unemployment: education, training and vocation

This question explores candidates' response to the problem of underachievement amongst marginalised young people (and marginalised people of all ages).

The number of young people in the West Midlands not in education, employment or training is above the national average. How do you propose to address this challenge effectively within the post election period of financial stringency and cutbacks?

Supplementary question

How do you plan to rebuild the local and national economy so that people of all skill levels can be included?

More detailed statistics and information can be found in the Region Skills Assessment 2009 report published by the WM Regional Observatory www.wmro.org

Environment and Sustainability

This question seeks to ascertain candidates' understanding and response to the link between the environment and the economy.

What practical steps will you take to address the problem of a decreasing supply of British and Global oil and gas resources and the need to develop the green economy?

'Green' economy is a fast growing new economic development model in contrast to the existing 'black' economic model based on fossil fuels, such as coal, petroleum, and natural gas.

Supplementary questions:

How will you ensure that large corporations comply with environmental regulations?

How do you intend to improve transport networks and how will these projects be financed?

What provision would you make for access by public transport to rural areas?

Should the UK become self sufficient in food?

NB: Birmingham Friends of the Earth 'faith and climate change' website: <http://faithandclimatechange.wordpress.com>

West Midlands – an urban and rural region

This question seeks to explore the extent to which candidates understand the complex interdependency between the urban and rural areas of the West Midlands and the need for coordinated policy across the urban/rural divide.

What is your strategy for balancing the needs of rural and urban people?

Supplementary question

What is the countryside for?

What makes a good city?

General Questions

What values underpin your involvement in politics?

Is there a policy that would lead you to defy your party whip on a vote in parliament?

Other Questions