

Hustings Policy for Local Elections

Aims and Objectives

1. The Belsize Society aims to hold a hustings for local elections to Camden Council.
2. The objectives are:
 - a. To hold a meeting where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions.
 - b. To provide voters from across the Belsize area with an opportunity to hear the views of candidates or parties.
 - c. The Belsize area includes the electoral wards of Belsize, Frognal, Hampstead Town, Gospel Oak, Haverstock and Swiss Cottage. There are therefore up to 16 potential council seats.
 - d. The hustings will be open to the public.
3. This policy sets out the practical considerations, then describes the policy for organising the hustings.

The Practical Considerations:

4. There are so many candidates - up to 16 candidates per party - that a hustings would be hard to manage were all candidates invited.
5. We can easily identify political party leaders in the sitting Council and ask that they co-ordinate from the candidates they are fielding in the Belsize area.
6. For other candidates (independents and the political parties that have no seats in the Council prior to the elections), making contact in an impartial manner will cause disproportionate cost.
7. As the BelSoc is a membership organisation, we can use the membership to provide questions ahead of the hustings, so that the questions can be selected impartially ahead of the hustings.

The Policy:

8. All party leaders or appropriate alternate in the sitting Council will be contacted six weeks before the election, notifying them of the intention to hold a hustings. They will be asked to:
 - a. Nominate three candidates who are standing in the Belsize area to represent their party at the hustings.
 - b. Agree with and then inform candidates of the way the hustings will be managed.
9. A chair will be identified for the hustings, who will oversee the event in an impartial manner:
 - a. Select the questions to be asked from those submitted to the Society.
 - b. Inform the audience at the meeting of candidates or parties standing who haven't been invited.
 - c. Allow candidates/parties to introduce themselves.
 - d. Decide on the length of time during which candidates must respond to questions and keep time.
 - e. Read out the questions and allow each candidate or party representative attending, a fair chance to answer questions.
 - f. Where appropriate, provide a reasonable opportunity for candidates to respond to points made against them by other candidates or party representative.
10. No more than three places will be given to any party and - at the decision of the Chair - the number may be reduced for practical reasons.
11. Any candidates in the Belsize area not standing for the invited political parties can request participation. The chair of the hustings will decide at the hustings whether the candidate can take part and the extent of participation. For example, the chair may decide to allow the candidate a short slot at the end of the hustings.