

The General Election 2015

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QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES: HOME ISSUES

Destitution

What concrete steps can be taken to restore the welfare safety net and ensure that no one needs to be referred to a food bank by 2020?

Is it morally defensible for some of Britain's richest individuals and companies to be avoiding paying their fair share of UK taxes?

Work

Five million people in the UK are paid less than the Living Wage and half of working families in poverty have an adult paid below the Living Wage. What will you do to make work pay?

Do you support bringing back the right to work for asylum seekers who have waited for 6 months or more for their asylum claim to be decided?

Housing

Over one in three working parents in England have to cut back on buying food to be able to pay for their home. What will you do to guarantee access to a genuinely affordable home?

Thousands of people end up sleeping on British streets and sofa surfing. Why not provide emergency shelter for all homeless people while a longer term solution is found for them?

Asylum and Immigration

Do you support an upper limit in law to the amount of time someone can be detained under the UK's Immigration rules?

Do you support the expansion of the detention estate to 5,000 bed spaces? If so, why, when almost half of those detained end up being released back into the UK?

Militarism

Do you support calls for the cancellation of an upgrade to Britain's Trident nuclear weapons system?

Every year the UK spends over [£37 billion](#) on the military. Are you in favour of that money being used to promote social and environmental justice instead?

QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

What is my attitude to people who are poor, unemployed, homeless? What am I doing to alleviate poverty and explore its causes?

What would be my response to a house in my street being used for homeless people or asylum seekers?

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES: WORLD ISSUES

Structural Poverty

Seven out of ten people live in countries where the gap between the rich and the poor is greater than it was 30 years ago. What will you do to speak out for the poorest and most vulnerable people around the world?

Climate Change

How will you support efforts to make tackling climate change a priority and to prevent it pushing people deeper into poverty overseas?

The [fossil-fuel divestment campaign](#) has grown rapidly over the past few years. Do you support the global campaign to urge divestment from all fossil fuel investments in oil, coal and gas?

Peace

Do you agree that while we continue to invest huge sums in military models of security, such as our involvement in the global arms trade, we fail to address adequately fundamental threats which include climate change and growing inequalities within and between countries?

Will you challenge the deployment of British armed drones around the globe, particularly that they should not be sent to the Middle East or Africa at the end of military operations in Afghanistan but returned to the UK?

Trade

Do you support trade justice over free trade - with the rules weighted to benefit poor people and the environment over big corporations?

Do you support the lobbying of the institutions of the European Union and its member states to stop the negotiations with the USA on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and not to ratify the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada?

Debt

More than 100 developing countries have got together at the United Nations to demand a new way of dealing with debt crisis, to make sure vulture funds can no longer profit from a nation's misery. Will you support this action against vulture funds?

QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

What am I doing to address structural injustice and promote environmental sustainability? How can I live more simply?

“The Soul of Politics” Jim Wallis

“Where are the political leaders who demonstrate the integral relationship between personal responsibility and social justice, who replace the politics of constituency with the politics of sustainability and environmental stewardship instead of mouthing the empty promises of endless growth and who will help us all rediscover the almost forgotten ethic of public service?”

The struggle to reshape the meaning of politics is one we should all engage in. By its very nature it is a community activity, a populist search. Politics must no longer be left up to the elites who have taken over the processes of public decision-making.... When politics is almost exclusively defined at the top of society, it invariably will be defined more by power than by moral values.

The search for a more ethically rooted politics is too important a task to be left to the powerful alone. It is a journey we must make together.”

Prayer from Church Action on Poverty

God of creation, we live in the world you have made.

Give us generous hearts to share your wealth with others.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

God of power,

Help us to remember that you can do impossible things.

Inspire us to work with you for change in our society.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

God of hope,

Be present in our communities.

Give us the strength to show your love right here.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

God of love,

You bring us healing and comfort.

Come close to those who need your peace.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

God of truth,

Draw us into your story of hope.

Challenge us to speak out for justice.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

Could you organise a pre-Election Meeting?

Some thoughts on forming a planning group to organise a local public meeting. Visit the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website:

http://www.ctbi.org.uk/pdf_view.php?id=924
provides information on planning meetings.

Also visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Book a suitable venue

A school or church hall is ideal. Make sure lighting and sound system are good. Have a visible top table.

Invite constituency candidates in good time

Your local elections office will publish a list of the candidates standing for election in your area. To find your local office, visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Candidate often respond positively to the timing of such meetings on the second or third Sunday during the election campaign. Perhaps sound out a few dates before making a firm booking. Guarantee them a good attendance and say that absence will be noted eg. an empty chair.

Advertise properly

Consider local press and radio stations, flyers, church bulletins and local social media.

Choose a good Chair

Try to find a well-known figure from the community, someone not connected with any one party. Politicians and the public can be aggressive, evasive or irrelevant so a strong personality is required. Brief the person carefully. A timekeeper could be appointed to support the Chair.

Questions

Decide how questions should be put from the floor. You could place cards and pens at the entrance hall and encourage people to write out questions in advance.

Statements

At the end of the meeting give candidates around three minutes each to make their own statements. Throughout, record responses and statements.