



MARCH 2010

local election campaign pack

introduction

This pack has been put together by Community Matters to help you campaign around the issues facing your community or community organisation. You can use it to identify your goals and audiences, and to plan an efficient, effective campaign.

A local election is a good time to raise awareness about issues facing your community organisation and the work that you do. Politicians and other decision-makers are more receptive during this time and as experts in your community you should be involved in the debate about how to run your local services.

While community organisations often express concern that by taking part in political activity they may lose their impartiality and balance this does not need to be the case and shouldn't put you off campaigning for your interests or those of the community sector. This pack aims to aid you in preparing and undertaking a well thought through local election campaign strategy and will help you be confident of your position within the local political arena.

The pack is divided into two main sections. The first, *The Planning*, looks at the planning that you will need to do either as an individual or by committee before you begin campaigning. The second part, *Taking Action*, is a more practical guide and will help you to successfully carry out your campaign and make the most of the run-up to the election.

Each sheet contains an overview of the main concepts covered and practical advice about each stage of the campaign process. There are also suggestions for further reading or other places to go for help.

1. The Planning

- a. Identifying your goals
- b. Identifying your audience

2. Taking Action

- a. Politicians and the press
- b. Raising awareness
- c. Holding an event

Important Election Advice for Charities

Local politics need not be a minefield if you are certain about the goals of your organisation. Provided that you understand the purpose of your community organisation, you can be confident that you are not affecting your impartiality.

- Check your organisation's constitution or governing documents.
- Engage with political parties but do not show support for any particular party or candidate.
- Political activity should only be a part of a broader programme of work in your community.
- Political activity should only be as a means to the ends of the organisation and its community or membership.

If you are in doubt about the neutrality of your organisation's activity, please visit <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.asp#21>

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Purdah

Purdah is an informal but well-established political convention which prevents civil servants and public servants making announcements or decisions during the run up to an election that could have political consequences. Traditionally this purdah period did not apply to charities. However, during the last election the Electoral Commission issued guidelines for charities during this period. This advice can be found on their website:

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/elect.asp>

It is important for your own reputation and for the reputation of charities in general that you remain politically independent, however committed you are to a particular cause. If you receive money to deliver services from local or national government this must never be used for political campaigns; during purdah you should not publish reports about publicly-funded work or promote this activity to funders or others either. Public servants will not be permitted to meet with you to discuss these aims or any campaign materials you produce or attend any events that could be politically sensitive.

Further Reading

Speaking Out: Guidance on Campaigning and Political Activity for Charities. Comprehensive and authoritative guide to campaigning by the Charity Commission

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.asp>

identifying goals

You have decided that you want your organisation to have a voice within the political arena, but you need a more focused approach than this if you are to campaign successfully. This section will help you decide what you want to get out of your campaigning efforts—there is a practical exercise at the end to help you identify your specific goals. Once you have completed this, you will be ready to move on to the planning stage.

Why good campaigns begin by identifying their goals

Campaigning in the run-up to your local election means persuading the public and politicians that your agenda is worthwhile. During election time, it is likely that you will be competing with many other organisations and political candidates for a voice about what is important at this election. In order that your campaigning be effective you should try to keep be focused and concise about what you want from the election. If your message is clear, not only will your organisation's goals be communicable and memorable, but what you need to do to bring about such change will become clear, too. You can also better avoid a compromise of your impartiality because you know with what you are entitled to be involved.

Identifying goals within a small organisation

As a small organisation, you have the advantage of expert knowledge of the community and of local people. Small organisations with a concise set of goals can be highly effectual in making much-needed changes.

Case Study: South Bank Employer's Group

This organisation of business leaders and the community sector put together *London's South Bank: A Manifesto for Action* and signed up all local election candidates and councillors in the run-up to the local election. They produced a document called *Under Pressure and On the Edge* which laid out five key areas that they felt needed urgent action, and an action plan with ideas for government, business and the sector to help achieve these aims.

One of these focussed on improving the leisure and sports facilities in the area. Specific ambitions were to open a swimming pool in Waterloo and finding a permanent home for the local library and creating a local coalition of community organisations. Several of their aims have been achieved in the last five years while some are still in progress. In particular, the new pool has been granted planning permission.

Although this is a very ambitious campaign and is more wide-ranging than most it does demonstrate what community groups can achieve. Not only has it made a real difference to the local area but it has also helped the Coalition to review their own progress and think about their strategic goals more clearly.

local election campaign pack : identifying goals

Your organisation need not produce a full manifesto, but this example shows the values of being concise and specific when setting goals for a campaign. You could be addressing a problem with a small, simple solution such as a new bench or litter bin to improve your facilities or keep your outdoor cafe tidy. Or it could be something more serious with a big, complex set of goals; perhaps your entire organisation or building is under threat. You are also allowed to campaign for the interests of community centres in general; for example the Community Matters 'Vision For Neighbourhoods' booklet has a set of clear goals in it that would benefit all community groups and volunteers.

How to identify the goals of your organisation

This process is about understanding what you want to get from campaigning and how this fits into the broader picture of your community organisation. With your aims clearly outlined and at the front of your mind, your campaigning will be more focused.

There follows an exercise to help you to identify your goals. You may answer the questions as a group or as an individual, but be sure that all those who are to be involved in the campaigning are in agreement and aware of the final objectives.

What does our community organisation do, and who does it benefit?

e.g. We are a youth club, which provides constructive activity for people aged 12-18 on Friday evenings.

What is the problem, issue or opportunity we are most concerned about?

e.g. There's nothing to do for young people after we shut, and youth crime keeps going up round here.

How does the objective of this campaign fit into our core mission?

e.g. By keeping young people off the streets we are minimising anti-social behaviour in our area and providing a sense of community for people who often feel excluded (teenagers).

Why should we campaign now?

e.g. We feel that the club will lose its popularity among young people if it cannot compete with the opening times of other places of leisure such as the new bowling ally, which stays open till 23.30.

Now look back over your discussion and any notes you've made, and summarize your responses into a couple of simple sentences.

e.g. We feel that our work in the community with young people merits greater support for our programme. We want permission to keep the hall open longer to help us improve the service that we offer.

identifying audience

Once you have decided on the goals of your local election campaign, you can begin to think about who needs to know about your goals. You will need to use your knowledge of the local community to identify key targets or groups who may be able to support you in achieving your goal. There is a practical exercise to help you plan your communications strategy.

In a local election, who needs to know about your campaign?

Your local government organises how local services are run. The people who represent you are called Councillors. During a local election, there will be a set of incumbent (in power) Councillors and candidates running for office. All of these people are worth talking to about your campaign and its goals, because they could be your next local representative. It is also important to communicate your message to candidates of all parties, so that you are not seen to be being partisan or backing any one particular party. There may be others in your community who have political power outside of official structures, for example the press, business leaders and other community organisations.

Who can a small community organisation communicate with?

As a small organisation, it is likely that you do not have huge financial or human resources at your disposal. Therefore your campaign should be targeted at the right people. While it is important to attract support amongst the general public, it is also important to identify who in your community has the power to change things.

Once you have a list of significant people or groups, you can also streamline this process by organising them into categories and then managing your communication with them according to their category. For example by creating blanket emails or letters to send to all 'Labour candidates' or 'local journalists'. There is more information about how to do this in the 'Making Contact with Politicians and Press' Information Sheet.

Your communications strategy

The next two pages are designed to help you manage who you talk to about your campaign and manage your ongoing relationship. First, you should spend some time trying to assess who is politically important in your community. Then, you can make contact with these people and check off what level of communications you are at with them. Below is some advice on how to fill out each section thoroughly and in other information sheets there is help and advice on how to build relationship with these people.

local election campaign pack : identifying audience

Politicians

Every Local Authority is organised slightly differently, but there generally two levels within the local governance structure. The most localised will be your ward, this is a small area within your district, which can be represented by one or several councillors. Your ward councillors then feed up to the district council level, which is a collection of councillors from various nearby wards.

The chart below asks you to insert the names of your ward councillors and of councillors from your wider local authority. There is also a space for you to record communication with your MP. Although, MPs represent you at the national level rather than local level, they too can be influential in local politics. You can find a list of your current local councillors and MPs at www.writetothem.com

Electoral Candidates

Electoral candidates are those people campaigning to become local politicians. Again, there will be two groups of people, those campaigning to represent you at the ward level and those at the local authority level. For this part of your communications strategy, you should try to get in contact with candidates from all the different parties, to avoid seeming partisan.

Local Press

Find out the name of the editor of your local newspaper and any journalists who are involved in covering local politics or local elections. You can do this by looking at the newspaper's website or calling their office and asking who would be best to get in touch with.

Local Organisations

Here is where your local knowledge will come into play. Thinking back over previous local elections, can you think of any similar small, community organisations who have campaigned effectively? Or, are there any other organisations who share the problems you have identified?

Others

Again, using your local knowledge, think of people in your community who are influential. For example, there may be a local celebrity who has an interest in the community sector or business leaders who support community initiatives.

local election campaign pack : identifying audience

Politician/party <i>Incumbent</i> Ward Ward Ward Council/ Executive lead Other interested councillor Other interested councillor Other Other MP	Email/ Letter sent?	Phonecall made?	Response?
Politician/party <i>Electoral candidates</i> Ward Ward Ward Ward Ward Ward Local Authority Local Authority Local Authority Local Authority	Email/letter sent?	Phonecall made?	Response?

To find out who your current ward councillors are you can go to www.writetothem.com or contact your local authority. Once the election has been called, however, the best source of information about who is standing will either be the main political parties' websites, or once nominations have closed you can look at the Notice of Election your local Returning Officer will publish. Although your ward is the obvious place to start raising awareness of your campaign, there is often a member of the council (or its Executive if you have one) who has responsibility for Communities, and other candidates for wards across your Local Authority might have an interest in your issue; all of them could be important.

local election campaign pack : identifying audience

Local Media/Comms	Email/ Letter sent	Phonecall	Response?
<p>Local newspaper Editor Journalist Journalist Photographer</p> <p>Local radio/ television News Editor Programme Editor Producer Correspondent</p> <p>Other Media/people Blogger Blogger Magazine Local Newsletter Community Radio Community Group Community Group Community Group Local branch of national charity Local celebrity Local business leader</p>			

Different people use different sources of information. Some use local papers, some prefer the telly or radio and others, especially younger people, use the internet. It is important to try and engage a range of different media in your campaign. Involving other people in your campaign will give it extra credibility and “talkability” – a famous name or a lot of support from other organisations will catch the press and public’s interest. Who else might support your aims?

Once you have outlined who you are going to tell about your campaign and its goals, you need to work out the best way of getting your message across. This section will help you understand how to put your communications strategy into action.

Effective communication

In the run up to an election, there are many groups and people trying to get their issue onto the agenda. In order that your campaign sticks out, you need to be concise and clear about what you are trying to do. The goal-setting exercise at the beginning of the pack should have clarified what your aims are. You now need to try and make these as accessible as possible to outsiders, who may not have the same level of knowledge as you. The most important thing about communicating effectively is to think about your audience. You then need to make it easy for this audience to understand the importance of your issue and how they can help you.

Following up your first contact

Once you have made initial contact, you need to continue building a relationship. The best way to do this is with a phone call about a week after you have sent their letter. This will hopefully prompt your contacts to read the letter if they have not yet done so, and if they have it is an opportunity to find out what they think. This sheet explains how to prepare for your follow-up call.

Politicians, the press and other 'politically important' people you have contacted are likely to receive lots of emails and post so you should not be offended if they have not got around to reading your letter or email. The fact that they have not seen your initial contact does not mean they will not be interested. You should also not be deterred if you cannot speak to someone directly; if you are persistent and clear, your message will be communicated to the right person.

First, you should try to gauge how much the person you are contacting knows about your organisation and campaign. Again, do not be deterred if they have no prior knowledge of anything you do. You should be prepared to very briefly explain your organisation and the problems you are facing. A good exercise as preparation for a follow-up call is called One Minute:

One Minute

Set yourself a timer, and in the space of one minute you communicate the following ideas out loud.

(It may help to look over your goal-setting sheet)

Our organisation is/ does...

We have been having problems with ...

We think we can stop this if our local politicians...

Second, you should encourage the person to engage with your issue. Try to ask what they think about the problem, have they had any personal experience of it? And what do they think about your organisations proposed solution? For example if you are concerned about traffic levels in your area, you could ask the person whether they think that such a level of traffic is problematic? Have they ever been stuck in a jam on their way to work? And then, do they think that an out of town diversion would work in solving this problem?

local election campaign pack : politicians and press

Depending upon the goals of your campaign, you may find resistance to your proposal. Some issues will be more contentious than others. If you think that your issue is contentious, then you should be prepared to calmly assert yourself. The best way to do this is to remind yourself why you think your campaign's cause is worthwhile (check your goal-setting sheet) and carefully explain this to those who do not agree. However, it is possible that not everybody will be supportive of your campaign. If you think that you cannot win some-one over, do not be discouraged.

Third and finally, if the person you are talking to seems in agreement with your campaign's goals, you should ask them to get involved. People can get involved in many different ways:

- Attend an event (See Holding An Event Information Sheet)
- Speak at an event (See Holding An Event Information Sheet)
- Publicize your campaign or an event you are holding – this is the type of support the press can offer.
- Sign an electoral pledge – this is specifically for politicians or electoral candidates. Draw up a short statement of support for your campaign and ask candidates to sign up to it. This could even include a pledge to do something if they get elected to help you achieve your goals.

Communicating with politicians

As a community organisation, you have something to offer politicians because you are a link to the frontline. Campaigning politicians are always looking for ways to make their presence felt in the community. If you can demonstrate that your cause is worthwhile, they will want to be involved. The best way to initiate contact is by sending a letter or an email outlining who you are, what you do and what your goals are. The easiest way to do this is by sending out a template with some parts personalised. Fig. 1 is an example of this. You may wish to use your answers from the goal-setting exercise to fill in this template. You can then follow this up with a phone call to find out if they will support you. If you have their support, you could then try to get them to make an electoral pledge or invite them to be part of an event.

Dear [insert name],

I am writing to you on behalf of [insert the name of your organisation]. [a couple of short sentences explaining what you do]. We have been having trouble for some time with [insert your key problems]. We want to solve this problem by [insert your goals].

However, we cannot do this without your help. We have the backing of the community, but we need local politicians to promise that changes will be made to ensure [insert you goals]. These changes would really benefit the community, [insert your reasons for wanting this change].

I hope that we have your support on this issue, it is important that [insert key problems] does not prevent us from providing [insert the service you provide your community with], which is a crucial part of our local community

We will be in contact soon to discuss this issue further.

Best,
[Your full name]
[The name of your organisation]

Dear candidate,

I am writing to you on behalf of Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre. We provide a space for people in our community to meet and take part in recreational activities such as dance classes, bingo and yoga. We have been having trouble for sometime with antisocial behaviour. We want to solve this problem by having the bench outside our building removed.

However, we cannot do this without your help. We have the backing of the community, but we need local politicians to promise that changes will be made to ensure that this bench is moved elsewhere. These changes would really benefit the community. People are nervous leaving our building when it is dark because there are youths who people find intimidating, hanging around the bench. Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre also has a crèche in the mornings and many of the mothers have complained about broken glass outside the centre.

I hope that we have your support on this issue. It is important that antisocial behaviour does not prevent us from providing this recreational space, which is a crucial part of our local community.

We will be in contact soon to discuss this issue further.

Best,
Natalie Ruffell
Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre

local election campaign pack : politicians and press

Communicating with the press

Although the press will be interested in the work that you do, they will be looking for a story. The 'why now' section of your goal-setting exercise could be particularly useful when talking to the press, because it will give your issue a sense of urgency. You should also try to arrange photo opportunities such as events or demonstrations. The press will also be interested in your problem if there is a politician or electoral candidate involved. Fig. 2 is an example of a letter you could send to your local press.

Dear [insert name],

I am writing on behalf of [name of your organisation] to let you know about our campaign, which will be of interest to your [readers/listeners/followers].

As you may know, [name of your organisation] is an important part of the local community. [a very short explanation of what you do]. However we have been having trouble for some time with [insert your key problems]. We want to solve this problem by [insert your goals].

The necessary changes would really benefit the community. [insert your reasons for wanting this change, and good "human story" examples to illustrate it]. [key problems] should not prevent us from providing [insert the service you provide your community with], which is a crucial part of our local community.

We are calling for politicians to make these change because [reasons for wanting a change]. We are approaching both incumbent Councillors and local election candidates because [key problem] is becoming an increasingly pressing matter. ['why now?']

If you would like to know more about our campaign, do not hesitate to get in touch. [contact details]

Dear Editor at the Croxley Gazette,

I am writing on behalf of Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre to let you know about our campaign, which may be of interest to your readers.

As you may know, Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre is an important part of the local community. We provide a space for people in our community to meet and take part in recreational activities such as dance classes, bingo and yoga. However we have been having trouble for some time with anti-social behaviour. We want to solve this problem by having the bench outside our building removed.

We are calling for politicians to make this change because people are nervous leaving our building when it is dark as there are youths who people find intimidating, hanging around the bench. Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre also has a crèche in the mornings and many of the mothers have complained about broken glass outside the centre. We are approaching both incumbent Councillors and local election candidates because anti-social behaviour is becoming an increasingly pressing matter. Attendance to our crèche and bingo nights has dropped and without the revenue from entrance fees, we will not be able to keep the centre open.

The necessary changes would really benefit the community. Anti-social behaviour should not prevent us from providing this recreational space, which is a crucial part of our local community.

If you would like to know more about our campaign, do not hesitate to get in touch.

My mobile number is 07921123655, or you can call the neighbourhood centre on 020 7890 67675.

Best,
Natalie Ruffell
Croxley Green Neighbourhood Centre

This section explains how to involve local people in what you are campaigning for and spread the word about what you are trying to achieve. Good campaigns draw upon the experience and passion of committed volunteers.

In order to be effective and sustainable your campaign will probably need support from a wide group of people in the community. You need to tell people about what you are trying to achieve and why it matters and then give them easy, rewarding and effective ways of getting involved and making a difference themselves. There are many ways of doing this, and because everyone has different strengths and is able to commit different amounts of time to campaigning, it's a good idea to give them a few options at the same time. This information sheet outlines a few of the basic ways you can do this.

Part of what will persuade people in positions of power or influence to listen to you is if they think you have wide support for your aims. Demonstrating that you listen to your community, you understand it and that they think you have the right ideas to make a difference to the things that concern them is extremely important.

Everyone is different; some people might like to get involved very heavily with your campaign, maybe offering to help organise an event, do the communications work or mail out letters to candidates. Others will agree with you, but have less time to give.

Stalls and stands

If there is a good place to have a stand, such as a pedestrian precinct or a Farmers Market, try manning a stall for a morning. It's an excellent way to spread the word, hand out flyers, do a petition or get new people involved.

Flyers and posters

A good place to start is with a small A5 flyer or postcard with the main goals of your campaign and a very brief list of what change you want to see. It doesn't have to be glossy, but it does need to be clear, eye-catching and not too busy. Posters in your own or others' buildings with clear contact numbers and meeting times can drum up support.

Planning Meetings

Lay on some tea, coffee and biscuits, publicise it well and hopefully new volunteers will come to a planning meeting where you can talk in depth about new ideas and divide up responsibilities for the campaign.

Petitions

A great way to demonstrate that lots of local people care about your campaign. Write a clear statement that people can sign up to, pin a copy up in the entrance to your building, take a copy to local events. Make sure you get people's name, address and a contact email or phone number. When you are happy with the results, tell the press and candidates about how many people have signed up.

local election campaign pack : raising awareness

Hold an event

Events or demonstrations are a good way to get local people interested and provide local news organisations with a good story (which is the only way you'll get them to write about your campaign). A demonstration doesn't need to be people standing outside City Hall with placards – it can be fun or humorous. There are several special considerations when planning an event, for more details see the 'Holding An Event' Information Sheet.

Communications volunteering

Ask if anyone has communications, design or art skills they could contribute – could they help design a flyer or poster, for example?

Mailing and phonecalls

This can be time-consuming. Once a letter is written it needs to be posted out and followed up

Further Reading

Campaigning is OK!: Novas Scarman. Overview of campaigning for community organisations, with an excellent directory of help available at the end of the document.

<http://static.novas.org/files/campaigningisok-456.pdf>

A good way to attract attention to your local election campaign is to hold an event. This section of the campaign pack will help you to get the most out of your event, and includes tips on planning, publicity and who to invite.

Improving democracy and advancing your campaign

Holding an event in the run up to a local election is a both a good way of supporting democracy in your area, raising awareness of the issues at the centre of your campaign or both. You could hold a debate between electoral candidates in your community centre or simply invite local people to come and listen to experts talk about the issue. These type of events support local democracy because people will better understand the policies of political candidate and will gain an increased awareness of problems in their area. For your organisation and campaign, an event is a good opportunity to publicise what you believe is an important problem by inviting politicians and the press.

When organising an event, there are several things that you should take into consideration:

Date and Time

This is one of the first things that you need to decide. You should set a date and time well in advance so that people do not make other plans. Weekends or evenings are best because people are not at work and if you want to invite Councillors or Candidates it is probable that they have day jobs, too.

Venue

If your community organisation has its own building; it is likely that you will hold you event there. However, if you do not own any buildings where you can hold an event, you should look into the cost of hiring a space and check availability in advance, too. You must also make sure that you have a decent set of microphones and speakers if the event is going to be large; everyone needs to be able to hear.

Speakers

These could be local politicians, local election candidates, important people in your community or experts in a certain field. You could invite several candidates from different parties to speak about their policies or you could ask speakers to discuss potential solutions to your problems. But remember that you should invite a cross-party selection of candidates in order that your do not compromise your non-partisan status.

Chair

It's important to choose your chair carefully. You need a respected but impartial chair who is not connected to a political party. It is also extremely important that they are confident and able to conduct the meeting fairly, giving enough time to each point of view but keeping the momentum going. Book them up early and brief them well on the structure of the event, including how long each contribution/ question should last.

Publicity

There are two types of publicity your event will need. Before your event, you need to publicize the date, time and venue. This will raise awareness for your event and help you gather an audience. Then, you should invite a pressperson to your event so that it has a lasting impact. For example, your local newspaper could use your event as a story at the same time as raising awareness of your issue.

local election campaign pack : holding an event

Audience

A good turnout will increase the impact on politicians and the press are more likely to report on your event if lots of people attend. To build an audience, you need to publicize your event to as many people as possible. This could be through posters, announcements at other regular meetings or by putting invitations through letter boxes.

Health and Safety

As a community association you need to make sure you meet certain health and safety requirements, particularly if you are using your own community centre

Structuring the Event

Holding a hustings event needs careful planning, and careful timing! You could have five or more people on the platform, plus the chair. You need to decide how long you want the whole event to last. You then need to decide how you're going to use that time. There are different ways of running a meeting, but we suggest:

- An introduction from the chair, explaining how the meeting will be run and the main topic of discussion
- A short introduction to each speaker
- A short statement from each speaker (you need to decide how long they'll each be able to speak for)
- Questions from the floor (one way of controlling how long you spend on this or preventing duplication is to ask people to submit questions as they come into the meeting, which the chair then selects – think Question Time)
- A short concluding statement from each candidate
- Thankyous from the chair

Assessing Risks

Most of us live in communities where political extremism or violence of all descriptions is a very minor concern. You will know the situation in your own neighbourhood very well and will be the best judge of what the risk of extremist action is.

The law is very clear that you are under no obligation to give a platform to a candidate whose aims are incompatible with your own or who is going to disturb the peace or encourage hate crime, or whose supporters might. This is not to say that you are able to only engage with those candidates you agree with, just that you don't have to work with people who compromise your aims as a community organisation.

As a charity it is very important that you only engage in political activity to promote your charitable aims, not to promote certain parties or individuals' election. Therefore under most circumstances it is best:

- To invite all the candidates, or as many as possible without making the event unwieldy
- To allow the public free access to the event (subject to health and safety or capacity considerations)
- To contact the Electoral Commission for advice about financial and other considerations, or read CC9 (see Introduction – Further Reading)

local election campaign pack : holding an event

If you are somewhat concerned about extremism (if there is a low-level problem in the community, or if you are worried about a few individuals spoiling the event) any or all of these suggestions may help:

- Consider not inviting extremist candidates (if there are any)
- Ask for pre-submitted questions, or for the audience to submit questions on their way in (nothing wrong with this – it's how Question Time is run!)
- Only allow your members or service users to attend the meeting (where relevant)
- Ensure your stewards are able to remove people if necessary

Always:

- Notify the police that you wish to hold an election event
- Ask the Electoral Commission for advice on how the way you are planning to run your event might affect your financial or other obligations

If you know that local groups are definitely going to cause trouble at your event or for your organisation:

- Make contact with your local police as a first step
- Consider whether you want to hold an event at all

If you do decide to go ahead, consider:

- Not inviting extremist candidates (you may find mainstream parties won't share a platform with them anyway)
- Asking for pre-submitted questions
- Only allowing members or service users to attend

local election campaign pack : holding an event

Event Checklist

In order to help you plan the event, you might like to work through the following checklist, with space to write down who's responsible for each task:

Area	Task	Person responsible
Date and Time	Contact potential chairs and confirm Contact and confirm stewards and other roles Check for clashes online or with other groups/ churches etc.	
Venue	Confirm and book venue Check sound system/ PA Hire any additional equipment Check Health and Safety requirements – how many people will you need to steward?	
Candidates	Once election is called, find complete list of candidates Decide who you are going to invite to speak, and why Contact and confirm speakers Brief speakers on how long/ on what topic they will be speaking and format of event	

local election campaign pack : holding an event

Publicity	Print posters Put up publicity material Contact press/ place adverts in local press Put advert on your website Contact other community organisations Word of mouth (e.g. to service users)	
Other	Refreshments? Name cards for speakers? Campaign information? Speaker biographies? Tell Community Matters you're holding an event and tell us how you get on!	