

GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING A 'MEET THE CANDIDATES' EVENT

Easy access to information about all candidates is key to a fair and transparent elections process.

With this in mind, the main purpose of organising an event is to give voters the opportunity to meet and hear from candidates. Through this direct interaction, voters get to know who the candidates are and see where they stand on the issues that affect our city and daily lives. This means Aucklanders can make well-informed decisions when voting in this year's local elections.

Key election dates

Friday 19 July
-
12 noon, Friday 16 August

Friday 20 September
-
12 noon, Saturday 12 October

Nomination period

Voting period

Who can run an event?

There are no specific rules around *who* can organise and run a meet the candidates event. In the past, community groups, resident and ratepayer associations, universities, iwi, marae, youth councils and many more individuals and groups throughout Tāmaki Makaurau have taken the initiative to give Aucklanders the chance to meet their candidates.

Note: Auckland Council does not run any 'meet the candidate events' itself.

When should an event take place?

The best time for a meet the candidates event is from 16 August – 20 September, between the close of nominations and the start of the voting period.

If you run an event before the nominations period ends, you run the risk of excluding candidates who have not yet confirmed their candidacy. On the other hand, if an event takes place after the voting period begins, voters may have already posted their votes. To guarantee voters the chance to hear from and speak with candidates, do try to run your event within our recommended timeframe.

Once nominations are confirmed, go to voteauckland.co.nz to find the publicly available contact details of candidates. Whatever day of the week your event takes place, consider having it at an appropriate time of day to give the biggest number of voters the opportunity to attend.

Venues and accessibility

It is up to you to decide where to hold your event but keep in mind how accessible the location and the venue will be for voters. For example, if the venue is not wheelchair-accessible already, provide a ramp for the event. Also, consider having translators available depending on the make-up of the community in the area where your event takes place.

Remember that you can hire Auckland Council venues for your event. Normal costs apply. Find more information about Auckland Council venues for hire [here](#).

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Health and safety

Be aware of the size of your venue and its maximum capacity, and make sure you do not exceed the numbers recommended. The nature of political debate means you should always be prepared for strong opinions and the possibility of confrontation. To minimise risk of an incident, make sure your host or moderator can control and steer the conversation in a safe direction if things get heated or off track.

Potential conflict can involve both audience members and candidates alike, so we recommend the moderator remind the candidates and the audience beforehand about what you expect in terms of behaviour.

Fairness and political neutrality

To ensure political neutrality at a “meet the candidates” event, we recommend that you invite all candidates running within the local board or ward area so they all have the same opportunity to meet voters. It is central to a fair elections process to make sure that no candidate is given a greater advantage over another.

To keep things fair throughout an event, hosts should try to give all candidates equal opportunity to answer questions and make statements. It can also help to steer candidates away from asking each other questions because these can sometimes be personal, unrelated and move debate away from the current topic of discussion.

Content

For ideas about what to ask candidates, have a look at the pre-election report (release date 24 July 2019). This is an informative, user-friendly overview of the key issues facing Tāmaki Makaurau in the next three years.

It is up to you whether you give candidates questions in advance, but keep in mind that debate is often richer when candidates are well prepared.

Auckland Council publishes responses to all requests for information we receive from candidates in the 2019 local elections. See the questions that candidates have asked along with the responses [here](#) and also [here](#) from Auckland Transport.

Let us know

If you have confirmed an event, advertise it without cost on the [OurAuckland website](#) and email us at Elections@aklc.govt.nz to let us know it is there.

Once we have received your email, we will then link it to the Auckland Council elections website - voteauckland.co.nz - for all Aucklanders visiting the website to see.