

Are you holding a hustings? Hustings intro This guidance is for anyone organising a hustings. Hustings A hustings is a meeting where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions from the audience. Hustings provide voters with an opportunity to hear the views of candidates or parties. When all candidates or parties standing are invited, a hustings does not promote any particular candidate or party because they all have the opportunity to speak and be questioned. This guidance explains when spending on a hustings may be regulated and when it is not. Some hustings cannot be reasonably regarded as intended to promote any parties or candidates over any others. We call this a 'non-selective hustings'. Spending on a non-selective hustings is not regulated and does not need to be reported by anyone. The guidance also explains situations in which a hustings can be reasonably regarded as intended to promote the candidates or parties who attend. We call this a 'selective hustings'. In this case either the hustings organiser or the candidates or parties may need to account for the spending. You can choose whether your hustings is selective or non-selective. Book traversal links for Are you holding a hustings? Non-selective hustings Non-selective hustings A non-selective hustings is a hustings that cannot reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against particular political parties or candidates. Spending on a non-selective hustings is not regulated. In our view, your hustings will be non-selective if: you have invited all the candidates or parties known to be standing in the constituency, region or other electoral area, or you have impartial reasons for not inviting certain candidates or parties Impartial reasons may emerge from the following considerations: resources and other practicalities that limit the numbers of people you can invite, for example time or space security concerns local prominence of some parties or candidates over others the number of elected representatives at the local or national level recent election results in the area Last updated: 24 May 2021 Book traversal links for Non-selective hustings Are you holding a hustings? Non-selective hustings: Good practice recommendations Non-selective hustings: Good practice recommendations If you decide not to invite all candidates for impartial reasons, there are some good practice recommendations you should follow if you want to ensure your hustings is genuinely not promoting particular candidates or parties more than others: Inform the audience at the meeting of any candidates or parties standing who haven't been invited Be prepared to explain your impartial reasons to candidates or parties you haven't invited Make sure that candidates or parties you invite represent a reasonable variety of view, from different parts of the political spectrum Allow each candidate or party representative attending a fair chance to answer questions and, where appropriate, a reasonable opportunity to respond to points made against them by other candidates or party representatives Last updated: 24 May 2021 Book traversal links for Non-selective hustings: Good practice recommendations Non-selective hustings Selective hustings Selective hustings A selective hustings is a hustings that can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against particular political parties or candidates – for example, if you invite some candidates or parties to your hustings and do not have impartial reasons for excluding the others. Spending on a selective hustings may, in certain circumstances, be regulated and count towards your spending limit or registration threshold in the run up to an election. Last updated: 24 May 2021 Book traversal links for Selective hustings Non-selective hustings: Good practice recommendations Accounting for the spending Accounting for the spending If you hold a non-selective hustings then the spending will not be regulated. Usually spending on a hustings is low, and it is unlikely that spending on a selective hustings alone will reach a spending limit or

require you to register with the Electoral Commission. If you hold a selective hustings, you should keep a record of how much you spend, along with any other spending on regulated campaigning, and be aware of the registration thresholds and spending limits. There are spending limits in each election. During the regulated period before certain major elections, campaigners will be required to register if they spend over a certain amount. If you spend a large amount of money on organising a selective hustings, or you engage in further regulated campaign activity during a regulated period, then you may need to be aware of the spending limits and registration thresholds. These can be found in our non-party campaigner guidance or in the candidate guidance for the relevant election. Candidate or party spending In some cases the candidate or party will have to account for the spending incurred on a selective hustings. This may be the case for a hustings in any election. If a candidate or party pays a fee to attend the hustings (whether it is selective or non-selective), this will count as election spending and must be reported in the relevant return. In some hustings, the costs of putting on the event will count as election spending for the candidates or parties involved. This will be the case if the hustings is run for the benefit of those candidates or parties. If you think this may be the case, you should contact us before you hold the hustings. Last updated: 24 May 2021

[Book traversal links for Accounting for the spending](#) [Selective hustings](#) [Other considerations for your event](#) [Security and accessibility](#) We do not regulate the conduct or management of a hustings. However we do recommend that if you organise a hustings, you should give some thought to what you will do to ensure the safety and security of the representatives who attend your event, and control the event effectively. It is important that voters have access to information be enable them to make an informed decision when casting their vote. You should therefore think about how you will make your event accessible. Last updated: 10 July 2023

[Book traversal links for Other considerations for your event](#) [Accounting for the spending](#) [Charities running a hustings](#) [Charities running a hustings](#) If you are a charity running a hustings, we recommend you read the guidance from the relevant charity regulator: [Part of UK Regulator](#) [England and Wales Charity Commission for England and Wales](#) [Scotland OSCR](#) [Northern Ireland Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#) Charities must not support or oppose any particular political party or candidate. One way of making sure that a charity does not do this is to hold non-selective hustings featuring candidates from as wide a political spectrum as possible. In some circumstances, charity law allows charities not to invite a candidate or party on the basis of their views or policies. For example, in their guidance for [and Welsh charities](#), the Charity Commission of England and Wales say this could apply to: “a representative from a political party which advocates policies which are in contravention of the charity’s objects, or whose presence or views are likely to alienate the charity’s supporters.” Although they are clear that: “a charity would have to have very strong reasons for deciding not to invite a mainstream political party.” ([Charities, Elections and Referendums](#) p3) It can be justifiable for a charity to hold a selective hustings of this kind. However, in our view, if you decide not to invite a party or candidate on the basis of their views or policies, this is not an impartial reason, in the sense that we have defined in this guidance. The hustings would therefore be selective. If the selective hustings takes place in a regulated period, then the spending will be regulated and count as regulated spending towards your total in the relevant part of the UK. Spending on a hustings is often low. You only need to register with us if you are going to spend over £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland on regulated campaign activity during the

regulated period. In a regulated period for a UK parliamentary general election, there is a limit of £9,750 for regulated spending which affects a particular constituency. Last updated: 24 May 2021 [Book traversal links for Charities running a hustings](#) Other considerations for your event