Local Elections 2019

When?

Thursday 2 May.

Is there an election in my area?

There are votes in 248 English councils, 6 directly elected mayors (Bedford, Copeland, Leicester, Mansfield, Middlesbrough and North of Tyne) and 11 local councils in Northern Ireland.

You can find out if there is an election in your area by entering your postcode on the following sites:
https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/
https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/

These sites will also show who the nominated candidates are and list contact details if they are known.

What does the council do?

Councils represent voters on a local level and are responsible for providing services and facilities in your area, which can include housing, education, environmental health, leisure, local transport and waste.

Councils have responsibility over local-authority schools and other state-run services in the area, such as gyms, museums and leisure centres, a lot of which will provide food to local citizens.

What can councils do for veganism?

A major thing that local councils can do to help tackle climate change and diet-related public health crises, whilst also protecting the rights of the ever growing vegan population, is to support our Catering For Everyone campaign.

The campaign calls for more and better plant-based options to be served on public sector menus, for example in schools, hospitals, councils and prisons. We have been calling for a change in the law to guarantee a plant-based option on every public sector menu, every day, available to all without anyone having to make a special request. Councillors and council candidates can also publicly back our campaign and use their influence within the council to encourage local institutions like schools and hospitals to better cater for vegans and the growing number of people who enjoy plant-based food.
Questions to ask local council candidates.

You can ask questions of prospective candidates at hustings events where candidates take questions from an audience of local citizens in places like community centres or church halls. You can also send questions directly to candidates email addresses, which can usually be found on promotional campaign material or via the website: https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/.

Some possible questions to ask candidates about our Catering For Everyone campaign:

1) Will you publicly support The Vegan Society’s ‘Catering For Everyone’ campaign? The campaign is calling for a change in the law to guarantee at least one plant-based option on every public sector menu, every day.
2) Will you bring a motion to [insert council name], which commits the council to provide a plant-based meal on every menu in its remit, every day? This will show that the council is serious about tackling climate change, diet-related public health crises and protecting the ever growing number of vegans locally.
3) Will you use your influence on public sector institutions to encourage better plant-based provision? This could be, for example, through the public procurement process in local schools or collaborating with the local health board.

Please share any responses with us as we are keen to engage with local councils and encourage them to serve more plant-based food on their menus, for the benefit of everyone.

If candidates or councillors are interested in bringing a motion to their council we have a template motion they can use or adapt.

Please send responses to campaigns@vegansociety.com or mark.banahan@vegansociety.com or feel free to give these email addresses out to candidates who wish to engage in dialogue with us.

Further information about the campaign

You can use this info to help explain to candidates why increasing plant-based provision is so important:

• Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.
• More people of all ages are making the decision to live vegan, with the number in the UK quadrupling in the last 4 years.
• Veganism has been found to come within the scope of international human rights provisions and vegans in the UK are protected under human rights and equality law. This means that service providers have an obligation to
ensure that they do not interfere with a vegan’s right to freedom of conscience, and a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid any discrimination on the grounds of veganism.

- Plant-based food is inclusive as it can be enjoyed by everyone, including those who are looking to consciously reduce their animal product consumption (flexitarians) and vegetarians.
- Plant-based food can also be easily adapted to make it suitable for people with religious dietary requirements (e.g. Islamic, Jewish, Sikh or Hindu requirements).
- Plant-based food is also often preferred by non-vegans due to health and/or environmental considerations.
- Plant-based diets are the most environmentally-friendly, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use, eutrophication & soil erosion.
- Last year, researchers from Oxford University conducted a landmark study concluding that eating a plant-based diet could be the “single biggest way” to reduce an individual’s environmental impact on the planet.
- The UN has also urged a global move towards a meat and dairy free diet for the benefit of our planet.
- Wider access to plant-based food could lead to more environmentally-friendly longer-term diet choices.
- Both the British Dietetic Association and the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognise that totally plant-based diets are suitable for every age and life stage, including pregnant women, breastfeeding women and young infants.
- Some research has linked plant-based diets with lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as lower rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer.
- Building familiarity with plant-based food in public sector settings could help address some of the many diet-related public health crises currently putting strain on the NHS.