# Upcoming hustings event aims to engage West of England voters



A hustings event focused on the upcoming West of England metro mayor election is set to take place in Bristol, organised by the Lawrence Hill Neighbourhood Forum in collaboration with Acorn Bristol, a community union. Scheduled for Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at the St Anne’s Board Mill Social Club in Redfield from 7pm to 9pm, this gathering aims to foster local engagement, although it’s necessary for attendees to RSVP to secure their spots.

This community event emerges against the backdrop of the controversial East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood initiative, which has stirred significant debate among residents particularly in Redfield and Barton Hill. While the venue has hosted important discussions, such as a report launch by medical charity MedAct highlighting the trauma experienced by residents near Barton House, focusing solely on the prevailing narrative pushed by the Labour party and their allies fails to account for the broader spectrum of viewpoints.

The leading candidates for the metro mayor role currently include Helen Godwin representing Labour, Oli Henman from the Liberal Democrats, Mary Page of the Green Party, and Steve Smith, the Conservative candidate. However, it’s worth noting that Arron Banks of Reform UK, representing a growing discontent with the establishment, may not receive an invitation to participate in the hustings. His absence from a pivotal earlier transport-focused event due to a breakdown in communication reflects the systemic silencing of opposition voices that prioritize the interests of the few over meaningful democratic engagement.

This political climate is shadowed by controversial statements from Banks directed at Bristol’s Somali community, which has sparked outrage among those who wish to uphold a sanitized narrative. While Bristol East MP Kerry McCarthy and others have decried Banks' words, it is essential to consider the importance of open dialogue—even with those whose views spark discomfort. Recent allegations made by Banks concerning crime statistics related to the Somali population, while incendiary, were debunked by research indicating that the actual percentage of violent crime suspects linked to this demographic is minimal.

Community sentiment appears to be mixed. Some members of the Somali community have expressed willingness to welcome Banks to the event, highlighting the necessity for dialogue in order to confront prevailing misconceptions. Fadumo Farah, a member of the Barton House community, shared her anticipation, stating, "Looking forward to seeing all candidates, yes, even Arron Banks. Respect goes both ways."

Encouraging residents to engage with candidates in candid discussions about the issues that matter most provides a vital opportunity for voters to evaluate all perspectives, ensuring that the tone of this election does not merely echo the rhetoric of the current ruling party but instead fosters a comprehensive dialogue that embraces the diversity of opinions across the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_West_of_England_mayoral_election> - This URL provides information on the candidates and the electoral system for the 2025 West of England mayoral election, confirming that Helen Godwin is the Labour candidate and Arron Banks represents Reform UK.
2. <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/about-us/democracy-funding-transparency/2025-west-of-england-mayoral-election/> - This page gives details about the role of the West of England Mayor and how to vote, highlighting the importance of community engagement in the election process.
3. <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/greens-tipped-tight-victory-mayoral-election/> - This article predicts the Green Party might have a tight lead in the election and discusses the diversity of opinions in the West of England, emphasizing the competitive nature of the race.
4. <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/greens-tipped-tight-victory-mayoral-election/> - This URL also discusses Arron Banks' controversial statements and their impact on local politics, highlighting the importance of open dialogue.
5. <https://services.bristol.gov.uk/council/voting-and-elections/combined-authority-mayor-election-for-the-west-of-england-weca-2025> - This page provides key information about the election process and deadlines for voting, which aligns with the overall context of community engagement and electoral participation.
6. <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/BD17126-MCA-Election-2025-6-CANDIDATES-ONLINE.pdf> - This PDF document offers detailed information about the candidates for the West of England mayoral election, including their backgrounds and election addresses.
7. <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/community-heart-controversial-traffic-scheme-10105995> - Please view link - unable to able to access data