

**GENERAL SECRETARY DEBATE
INFORMATION FOR BRANCH NEWSLETTER, FACEBOOK
– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –**

Note:

Please feel free to use this copy in your branch newsletter or branch Facebook, along with images, video and flyers available in the Electronic Press Kit (EPK) which you can download from bit.ly/equitymln-epk

Equity Member-Led Network hosts online General Secretary Debate

Equity members are responsible for electing the next General Secretary of our union and you will soon be asked to cast your vote.

A group of Equity members is organising a hustings, a live online event chaired by Equity member Sandi Toksvig where you can meet the two candidates for the job and ask them the questions that will help you decide who you want to lead our union in the future. The online event starts at 4pm on Wednesday 20 May 2020.

The General Secretary is the union's chief executive officer. It is a paid post with a 5-year term. Christine Payne, the current General Secretary, is retiring in October.

You can read more about the General Secretary Debate, how to submit your questions, and register to join the live online event [here](#).

NOTE: Or use link <https://bit.ly/gensec-event> Below is the event information posted on the Equity website from this link, which you are also welcome to share.

The General Secretary is the union's chief executive officer, head of the union's staff, and spokesperson for our union. The role includes negotiating with employers, lobbying the government, and advancing the interests of the union members. As an Equity member, you can vote for the next General Secretary and elect who will lead our union in the future.

Equity members are invited to join the General Secretary Debate on Wednesday 20 May 2020 starting at 4pm.

You can sign up to join audience at <https://bit.ly/gensec-2020-hustings>. Registration closes at midnight Monday 18 May and the debate will be broadcast on Crowdcast. An important part of this event will be questions from members. You can send your questions to the candidates to hustingsquestions@pcmprojects.co.uk. Please make sure you send them by midnight on Wednesday, 13 May 2020, a week in advance of the event.

During the live online debate, chair Sandi Toksvig will introduce the candidates and after they have both spoken, invite them to respond to the pre-submitted questions which they will already have seen. The online audience can also post live questions during the event. The General Secretary Debate will be recorded and available to Equity members after the event.

Two candidates, Simon Curtis and Paul Fleming are standing for the role of Equity General Secretary. Ballot papers will be arriving in the week of 1 June 2020. You will be asked to vote for one of these candidates and post your ballot back to arrive before Wednesday 8 July 2020. Members who may not be at their usual postal address over the coming weeks can change their primary address on the Equity website.

Sandi Toksvig OBE, writer, broadcaster, comedian, actor and political activist, is an advocate for gender equality and co-founder of the Women's Equality Party. Says Sandi Toksvig; "It's been 15 years since Equity elected anyone to this role. The next General Secretary of Equity will be steering the Union, the Council and its members through an uncertain future post-Covid and I am honoured to chair this opportunity for the union membership to meet and question both candidates in a live online hustings."

MORE INFORMATION

What is an online hustings?

It is a non-partisan event organised by the Equity Member-Led Network, offering you an opportunity to get to know the candidates and their vision for Equity in a live online broadcast. Equity members are invited to submit questions to both candidates, before and during the live debate, which will be recorded and can be watched at a later date.

Why do members vote for the General Secretary?

Equity is a member-led organisation and that's why it's so important that you vote in this election. You get to elect the next General Secretary. Voting will be by post and ballot papers will be sent out to all members.

Where can I find out more information about the candidates and their manifesto?

Simon Curtis – <https://simoncurtis.co.uk/>
Paul Fleming – <https://paulwfleming.co.uk/>

How do I join the event on Crowdcast?

1. Please register to be an audience member at <https://bit.ly/gensec-2020-hustings> using your email address held by Equity and your membership number
2. You will receive a confirmation email and a reminder closer to the event
3. Click on the link in your confirmation email or log into Crowdcast to take up your digital seat from 3.50pm on 20 May. The event starts promptly at 4pm
4. You can leave a pre-show comment, submit a question and chat during the event

Can I ask the candidates a question?

You are encouraged to submit questions to both candidates by midnight Wed 13 May, a week in advance of the event, to hustingsquestions@pcmprojects.co.uk.

This is a dedicated email address for the purpose of collecting your pre-submitted questions. You can also post a question during the live event directly on Crowdcast.

What kind of question can I ask?

What do you think is important in a General Secretary? You can ask a question about any current or future matter that is important to you. Here are some possible topics, but please feel free to choose your own.

- Leadership
- Union finances
- Management of staff
- The current crisis
- Brexit
- Communication
- Arts funding
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Live and recorded performance and services
- Member support
- Any other topic – ask the questions that matter to you

Pre-submitted questions around a similar topic may be grouped together to enable the candidates to answer a broad spread of questions in the time available.

General information

Individual members can express support for who they wish including posting their preference on any social media forum. This should be done politely and respectfully, in line with the rules of the Union and safe space principles.

In the current crisis, branches do not have the right to nominate or support candidates for President or Council in the coming elections and do not have the ability under the rules to endorse anyone else.

Here are all the Rules and Standing

Orders: <https://www.equity.org.uk/about/reports-and-documents/rules-of-the-union/>