

ECE Standing Orders

These standing orders are a supplement to the Federal and Party in England constitutions.

1. MEETINGS

- 1.1. The first English Council Executive meeting in each calendar year shall set a schedule of meetings up to, and including, the first meeting of the following calendar year.
- 1.2. The agenda for a meeting shall be circulated at least one week before the meeting. Supporting papers and reports shall if possible be circulated with the minutes, and in no event less than two clear days before the meeting.
- 1.3. Late papers may only be admitted if they relate to matters which have arisen too late for them to be circulated by these deadlines or if the meeting agrees by a two-thirds majority to accept them.
- 1.4. A special meeting may be called at the discretion of the Chair, or on the written application of at least five members of the English Council Executive. Such a meeting shall contain no business other than that specified in the notice summoning the meeting.
- 1.5. The Chair shall normally chair the meeting and will do so according to normal standards of debate. Anyone disrupting the good conduct of the meeting can be excluded from the rest of that meeting. The Chair's ruling on any matter shall be final unless challenged by an immediate vote.
- 1.6. Items of any other business for an English Council Executive meeting shall be notified to the English Party office by 5pm on the day before the meeting.
- 1.7. The Regional Chairs or Regional Representatives (where that is specified in the Regional Constitution) and the Chair of the Young Liberals may be substituted at English Council Executive meetings if they cannot attend according to the procedures of the relevant Region/Young Liberals.
- 1.8. Votes of No Confidence –
 - Members of the Executive or its sub-committees may be removed for negligence, incompetence, or incapacitation.
 - Negligence or incompetence must have caused the party to have been politically, legally, or reputationally exposed as a result of/from their acts or omissions or could have been so exposed if the circumstances had become more widely known.

- Incapacitation does not refer to the legal definition of incapacitation but occurs where the executive believes an individual is risking themselves, others, or the party as a result of their physical or mental health.
- Any removal requires a complaint by a member of the English Council being raised with either the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs. In receipt of the claim, the officer informed must then raise this with the Executive. A panel discussion will be held, where evidence may be raised by any member of the Executive and where the individual accused shall have the right to respond to evidence and present evidence in their defence, After the panel discussion a vote of the Executive will be held. A majority vote of two thirds of members of the Executive present and voting will be enough for the member to be removed.
- In the event of the complaint being about the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs, then the Treasurer shall raise this with the Executive.

2. **ELECTIONS:**

- 2.1. When members of the English Council Executive are required to elect a person or persons to any post, an election shall be held by secret ballot and Single Transferable Vote at a meeting of the English Council Executive.
- 2.2. An election shall only occur at a meeting of the English Council Executive meeting if notice was given in the final agenda for that meeting.
- 2.3. The Chair shall as necessary, appoint a Returning Officer, who shall be someone who is neither a candidate nor an elector in any of the elections concerned. The Returning Officer's rulings shall be final.

3. **REPORTS:**

- 3.1. Each meeting of the English Council Executive shall normally receive written reports from:
 - Chair.
 - Vice Chair Regional Parties Committee.
 - Vice Chair Regional Development.
 - Treasurer (which shall include a report on the work of the Finance and Administration subcommittee).
 - Chair of the English Candidates Committee.
 - All representatives of the English Party on Federal Committees and other bodies, including G8.
 - Any sub-committees, task forces and other groups of the English Council Executive.

4. VICE-CHAIRS:

- 4.1. The English Council Executive shall elect two Vice-Chairs from amongst its voting members. One will be the Vice Chair Regional Parties Committee and one will be the Vice-Chair Regional Development.
- 4.2. Elections for the Vice-Chairs shall be held at the first meeting of the English Council Executive following English Party elections to the English Council Executive. They shall hold office for the duration of the term of the English Council Executive (two years) and until the election of their successor. The Vice-Chairs shall be eligible for re-election save that no person may hold the office of Vice-Chair for more than four years in any consecutive six.
- 4.3. If either of the Vice-Chairs ceases to be a member of the English Council Executive, they shall also cease to be a Vice-Chair and a new election shall be held for their post.
- 4.4. One of Vice-Chairs shall be responsible for taking the Chair's role in their absence, and for chairing any parts of the meeting over which it is inappropriate for the Chair to preside.

5. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

- 5.1. The Treasurer shall be elected at the first meeting of the English Council Executive following English Party elections to the English Council Executive. They shall hold office for the duration of the term of the English Council Executive (two years) and until the election of their successor.
- 5.2. The Treasurer shall be responsible for advising the English Council Executive on financial matters and ensuring that the English Council Executive is provided with regular and accurate reports of the Liberal Democrats in England's financial situation.
- 5.3. There shall be a Finance and Administration subcommittee. The members of the Finance and Administration subcommittee shall be the Treasurer (who shall chair the subcommittee), the Chair, the Vice Chairs, the Chair of the English Candidates Committee and four members elected by and from the English Council Executive. Appropriate members of staff, including the Federal Party's Financial Controller and staff from Membership Services, may be invited to its meetings, but shall not have a vote.
- 5.4. Elections to the Finance and Administration Subcommittee shall take place at the first meeting of the English Council Executive following English Party elections to

the English Council Executive. They shall hold office for the duration of the term of the English Council Executive (two years).

- 5.5. The Finance and Administration subcommittee shall be responsible for:
- Monitoring, and reporting to the English Council Executive on, the finances of the Liberal Democrats in England.
 - Making recommendations to the English Council Executive on financial matters, including budgets for subsequent years.
 - Liaising with the auditors of the Liberal Democrats in England including making recommendations to the English Council Executive for the approval of the Party's accounts.
 - Conducting negotiations with the Federal Party on financial matters.
 - Devising and monitoring the implementation of internal communications strategies for the English Liberal Democrats, in particular communication with English Council members and the Regions.
 - Day to Day staffing matters including the filling of vacancies among the staff on the same contractual terms as the previous staff member. The Finance and Administration Committee shall not have the power to change the terms of staff contracts or change staff line management or reporting lines. Such changes must be considered by English Council Executive.
 - Advising the English Council Executive on constitutional and procedural matters.
 - The conduct and organisation of English Council meetings.
 - Exercising the functions of the English Council Executive in emergency between scheduled meetings of the English Council Executive, providing that when acting in this capacity the sub-committee shall in every case consider whether it would be more appropriate to convene a special meeting of the English Council Executive in accordance with 1.4 above.
 - Monitoring the operation of any Service Level Agreements under which services are provided to the English Party and assessing the extent to which such agreements are being complied with.
 - Other matters as requested by the English Council Executive.
- 5.6. EFAC shall have the right to consider loans for helping with election deposit or local party development purposes from Regions or Local Parties. There shall be a repayment scheme agreed for any loans prior to them being agreed. If the repayment schedule for a loan is not met then EFAC shall have the discretion to recover the monies from deductions from the relevant Regional rebate or Local Party service Fee.
- 5.7. There shall be a Regional Parties subcommittee. The members of the subcommittee shall be the Vice-Chair RPC (with the Chair as alternate) who shall chair the subcommittee, the Chair, the Chair of the English Candidates Committee

and four members elected by and from the English Council Executive. In addition, the subcommittee may co-opt up to six other members from the English Council. All such co-options must be ratified by the English Council Executive, and the relevant individuals must, in the opinion of the ECE, all possess experience or expertise of relevance to one or more of the functions of the subcommittee, and which is likely to assist the subcommittee in the discharge of the relevant function or functions. Appropriate members of staff may be invited to its meetings but shall not have a vote.

5.8. Elections to the Regional Parties Subcommittee shall take place at the first meeting of the English Council Executive following English Party elections to the English Council Executive. They shall hold office for the duration of the term of the English Council Executive (two years).

5.9. The Regional Parties subcommittee shall be responsible for:

- Monitoring and encouraging best practice by regional parties and making recommendations to the English Council Executive for action.
- Monitoring support provided by the English and Regional Parties to Local Parties, encouraging best practice in this area by Regional Parties and making recommendations to the English Council Executive for action.
- Monitoring and advising on draft strategies to promote the development of Regional Parties in terms of campaigning activity, membership and fundraising and making recommendations to the English Council Executive for action.
- Ensuring the compliance of the Party in England with the provisions of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
- Making arrangements for the exercise of the membership disciplinary functions of the Liberal Democrats in England under Articles 2 and the Membership Rules of the Liberal Democrats in England, Articles 3.8 to 3.10 (Joint arrangements of Local Parties, approval and selection) and Article 8.7 (derecognition of Council Groups) of the Constitution, for which purpose it may appoint a panel of not less than five persons who must be members of the English Party (which panel shall be deemed to be a meeting of the subcommittee for the purposes of the Membership Rules).
- Monitoring, and reporting to the English Council Executive on, any compliance issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the Liberal Democrats in England.
- Other matters as requested by the English Council Executive.

5.10. The Finance and Administration Committee and the Regional Parties Committee shall submit their minutes (subject to any English Party Chair's rulings under Standing Order (8) to all members of English Council Executive after they are

agreed by the relevant Committee Chair and circulated for approval to the relevant committee members.

5.11. Vice Chair for Regional Development shall be responsible for:

- Acting as a point of contact in the National Party for Regional Officers to raise their issues they are experiencing and need support with (not complaints, compliance or disciplinary).
- Sharing best practice and potential solutions to common issues
- Sharing of information and circulation of documentation for Regional Officers.
- Other task and finish projects to be agreed by the English Council Executive that fall within the area of supporting the Regions so they in turn can support their Local Parties more effectively.

6. OTHER SUB-COMMITTEES/TASK GROUPS:

6.1. The English Council Executive may appoint other sub-committees, task forces and other groups as appropriate, provided they have clear terms of reference and membership which shall be agreed by the English Council Executive.

6.2. There shall be a Joint Policy Committee of the Regions. The members of the sub-committee shall be the English Party representative on the Federal Policy Committee, who would be its Chair, and the directly elected policy officer of each region, or an appointee of the Regional Executive where such a post does not exist in a region.

6.3. The Joint Policy Committee of the Regions function will be to provide the democratically accountable chairs of regional Policy Committees or their equivalent with a forum through which they could formally feed their responses to Federal Policy Committee and Federal Conference Committee on matters affecting England.

7. QUORUM:

7.1. The quorum for a meeting of English Council Executive or any sub-committee of English Council Executive shall be one-third of the voting members of English Council Executive or of that sub-committee (as the case may be) or three voting members, whichever shall be the greater.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY:

8.1. Reflecting the party's commitment to open government and freedom of information, all items discussed by English Council Executive and its sub-committees shall be treated as open. The Chair shall, however, have the right to

rule a specific item confidential, for example, in the case of a sensitive issue of finance or staffing. A simple majority can overrule an item being confidential. Respect for individual rights will generally require specific views not to be attached or ascribed to individuals.

9. DISCLOSURE:

9.1. To preserve high standards of openness, members of the English Council Executive and its sub-committees should disclose:

- Any professional or financial relationship which influences, or be reasonably seen by others to influence, their actions during particular discussions;
- Any professional interest when the pecuniary interests of the profession are directly affected by an issue under discussion.
- Any particular professional circumstances that may influence, or be reasonably seen to influence, their pursuit of a specific issue at the English Council Executive or any sub-committee of English Council Executive (as the case may be).

10. ACCESS:

10.1. The agenda and non-confidential papers for the English Council Executive and its sub-committees, shall be posted on the members' only section of the Party website at the same time as they are sent to members of the committee or sub-committee.

10.2. The non-confidential minutes shall be posted after they have been agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting by the English Council Executive.

11. FEDERAL PARTY COMMITTEES:

11.1. Where the Constitution of the Federal Party provides that the Liberal Democrats in England may appoint a substitute representative to attend a meeting of any Committee if its representative is unable to attend, then the elected representative to the Committee shall appoint a substitute in consultation with the Chair of the Liberal Democrats in England.

12. VARIATION AND SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS:

12.1. Any motion to vary these Standing Orders shall, when proposed and seconded, be adjourned without discussion to the next meeting. Such a motion shall require a two-thirds majority.

12.2. Any motion to suspend these Standing Orders shall require a two-thirds majority.

VERSION CONTROL:

Updated to reflect two-year terms by the English Council Executive on 21st January 2023

Joint Policy Committee of the Regions passed by the English Council Executive on 25th March 2021

Ratified by the English Council Executive on 20th February 2021

Proposed changes for the English Council Executive 16th January 2021

As amended by the English Council Executive 13th July 2019