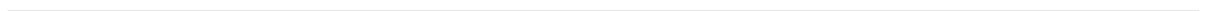


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**The Federal Constitution  
of the  
Liberal Democrats**

**Liberal**   
**Democrats**



### Revisions

The text of the Constitution was last amended following the Spring 2025 Federal Conference. The transfer of power changes made following the approval of F10 Constitutional Amendment: Implementing the Lessons of the General Election Review during Spring Conference 2025, still need ratification by all three State Parties through their normal processes. The previous version of the Constitution, prior to these changes can be found [here](#).

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## PREAMBLE

The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. We believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long term continuity of life in all its forms. We champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals, we acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their right to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.

We look forward to a world in which all people share the same basic rights, in which they live together in peace and in which their different cultures will be able to develop freely. Upholding these values of individual and social justice, we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, ethnicity, caste, heritage, class, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality. Recognising that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, we promote human rights and open government, a sustainable economy which serves genuine need, public services of the highest quality, international action based on a recognition of the interdependence of all the world's peoples and responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources. We believe that people should be involved in running their communities. We are determined to strengthen the democratic process and ensure that there is a just and representative system of government with effective Parliamentary institutions, freedom of information, decisions taken at the lowest practicable level and a fair voting system for all elections. We will at all times defend the right to speak, write, worship, associate and vote freely, and we will protect the right of citizens to enjoy privacy in their own lives and homes. We believe that sovereignty rests with the people and that authority in a democracy derives from the people. We therefore acknowledge their right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs and commit ourselves to the promotion of a democratic federal framework within which as much power as feasible is exercised by the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. We similarly commit ourselves to the promotion of a flourishing system of democratic local government in which decisions are taken and services delivered at the most local level which is viable.

We will foster a strong and sustainable economy which enables people to thrive in their communities, assessing progress by measuring people's wellbeing. Such an economy will encourage necessary wealth creating processes, develop and use the skills of the people and work to the benefit of all, with a just distribution of the rewards of success. We want to see democracy, participation and the co-operative principle in industry and commerce within a competitive environment in which the state allows the market to operate freely where possible but intervenes where necessary. We will promote scientific research and innovation and will harness technological change to human advantage.

We will work for a sense of partnership and community in all areas of life. We recognise that the independence of individuals is safeguarded by their personal ownership of

property, but that the market alone does not distribute wealth or income fairly. We support the widest possible distribution of wealth and promote the rights of all citizens to social provision and cultural activity. We seek to make public services responsive to the people they serve, to encourage variety and innovation within them and to make them available on equal terms to all.

Our responsibility for justice and liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries; we are committed to fight poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods and services. Setting aside national sovereignty when necessary, we will work with other countries towards an equitable and peaceful international order and a durable system of common security. Within the European Community we affirm the values of federalism and integration and work for unity based on these principles. We will contribute to the process of peace and disarmament, the elimination of world poverty and the collective safeguarding of democracy by playing a full and constructive role in international organisations which share similar aims and objectives. These are the conditions of liberty and social justice which it is the responsibility of each citizen and the duty of the state to protect and enlarge. The Liberal Democrats consist of people working together for the achievement of these aims.

## **ARTICLE 1: Name, Objects and Succession**

- 1.1 The name of the Party shall be the Liberal Democrats. It may be additionally known in Welsh as Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol. It is referred to in this Constitution as “the Party”.
- 1.2 The objectives of the Party shall be:
  - a. to be the successor to the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party (“the Former Parties”);
  - b. to seek to achieve the objects set forth in the Preamble to this Constitution; and
  - c. in order to achieve such objects, to secure the election of Liberal Democrats as Members of Parliament, UK Members of the European Parliament and members of local and other elected public authorities.

## ARTICLE 2: Provisions Relating To The Constitution

2.1 The Party shall be a federation constituted by the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Welsh Liberal Democrats/Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru and the Liberal Democrats in England (the State Parties).

Regional Parties in England may seek recognition as State Parties (any such recognition requiring a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the Conference).

The Federal Conference may, upon the recommendation of the Federal Board, resolve to establish and/or recognise a State Party in Northern Ireland.

The Party shall also include individual members and Local Parties outside the United Kingdom and, pending the establishment or recognition of a State Party there, in Northern Ireland.

2.2 The federal institutions of the Party are together referred to in this Constitution as "the Federal Party". This Constitution and any rules made thereunder bind the Federal Party and the State Parties. In all other regards a State Party shall be sovereign and shall be entitled to exercise any power not reserved to the Federal Party.

2.3 The following functions are reserved to the Federal Party (subject to the rights of consultation afforded to State parties and others by this Constitution):

- a. the determination of policy in the areas specified in Article 7;
- b. the Party's overall strategy;
- c. overall preparations for Parliamentary and European Parliamentary Elections, including arrangements for candidate approval and selection;
- d. the overall presentation, image and media relations of the Party; and
- e. international relationships.

The Federal Party shall also promote campaigning throughout the United Kingdom, and may raise funds and do anything else which is incidental to its functions.

2.4 The provisions of this Constitution shall be implemented with regard to the principle that men and women shall have an equal opportunity of participating at every level of the Party, subject to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

2.5 Whenever this Constitution provides for the election by party members to a Federal Committee, not less than 40% or, if 40% is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding 40% of those elected shall self-identify as men or non-binary people, and self-identify as women or non-binary people respectively.

- 2.6 Whenever this Constitution provides for the election by party members of ten or more persons to any Federal Committee or other Federal body:
- a. not less than 10% or, if 10% is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding 10% shall be from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds;
  - b. (not less than 10% or, if 10% is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding 10% shall be disabled people; and
  - c. not less than 10% or, if 10% is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding 10% shall be people from under-represented sexual orientations and gender identities, including trans and non-binary identities.
- 2.7 The provisions of this article shall not prevent places being filled if diversity requirements are not met due to insufficient candidates with the stated characteristic being nominated. Such elections shall take place from a common list and in accordance with the election rules made by the Federal Board as from time to time in force. Where this Constitution or any Standing Orders made thereunder appear to conflict with the Equality Act 2010, the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 shall prevail.
- 2.8 No elected representative in any body in the Party shall be mandated.
- 2.9 Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the Party must be a current member of the Party.
- 2.10 This Constitution may only be altered:
- a. by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at the Federal Conference;
  - b. where any such alteration has been submitted in accordance with the Standing Orders of that Conference by the Federal Board or any other persons or bodies entitled to submit motions or amendments under Article 7.6 and notified to Local Parties at least six weeks in advance; and
  - c. in the case of any alteration to the relative powers and functions of the Federal Party and the State Parties or to this paragraph (c), it is passed by the internal procedures of each State Party.

## ARTICLE 3: Membership and Registered Supporters

- 3.1
- a. Membership of the Party or participation in its Registered Supporter Scheme is open to all persons who agree with its fundamental values and objectives without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, caste, heritage, class, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.
  - b. Members or Registered Supporters of the Liberal Democrats must treat others with respect and must not bully, harass, or intimidate any Party member or Registered Supporter, member of staff employed to support Liberal Democrats, Party volunteer, or member of the public. Such behaviour will be considered to be bringing the Party into disrepute.
  - c. Members or Registered Supporters of the Liberal Democrats must abide by the Party's data protection rules as laid out in the Member's Data Protection Code.
- 3.2 Membership shall be acquired through an enrolling body, being:
- a. a Local Party in the area of which the member lives, works or studies (or, with its consent, another Local Party);
  - b. an Affiliated Organisation representing youth and/or students;
  - c. a State Party in accordance with its internal procedures (and so that any overseas member in a location where there is no Local Party may become a member via a State Party designated by the Federal Board to act as agent for the Federal Party); or
  - d. any Affiliated Organisation that the Federal Board considers ought to be entitled to enrol members of the Party.

An applicant shall become a member on acceptance by the enrolling body, payment of the requisite subscription and registration. However, a State Party may, by its internal procedures, determine that eligibility of a member to vote in Local Party elections (including Parliamentary and local government selections) may be subject to a minimum requirement as to age (not being more than 10 years) and/or length of continuous membership (not being more than 15 months); and the provisions of this constitution as to members' voting rights shall be construed accordingly.

- 3.3 The Federal Party shall operate and administer a Registered Supporter Scheme, open to those who wish to support the Party's work without joining as a member. Except where otherwise dictated by this Constitution or those of the State Parties, the regulations governing the Registered Supporter Scheme shall be made by and administered on behalf of the Federal People Development Committee, notified to the Conference and published on the Party website.

3.4 Responsibility for renewal of membership shall lie with State Parties but these may, by their internal procedures, provide for this function to be fulfilled by any other body or bodies within the Party. Membership will be automatically terminated if the renewal subscription is not received within three months following the due date.

3.5 All other matters relating to the admission or refusal of admission to membership of any person, or for the revocation or cessation of membership of any member, including the basis on which Local Parties may be involved in the recruitment and renewal of members, shall be governed by the Constitutions of the State Parties or by membership rules made under them, except that:

- i. where, in any part of the United Kingdom, provision is not made in any of these respects by the State Party concerned, Articles 3.6 to 3.8 shall apply;
- ii. a right of appeal pursuant to Article 22 once any procedures internal to the State Party concerned have been exhausted, cannot be excluded in relation to the interpretation of Article 3.1; and
- iii. each State Party shall give notice to the other State Parties of any refusal of admission or revocation of membership.
- iv. where notice has been given under Article 3.5 (iii), any application for admission or readmission shall be referred to the original State Party.

Subject to the conditions set out in the Constitution of or in the rules made by the State Party concerned, a member shall be a member of:

- a. where the enrolling body is a Local Party, that Local Party or, where the enrolling body is not a Local Party, an appropriate Local Party in terms of Article 3.2a; and
- b. any applicable State Party and/or Regional Party; and
- c. the Federal Party.

3.6 No person may simultaneously be a member of more than one Local Party. A member may re-register as of right in a different Local Party under the terms of Article 3.2 (a), or may, with the consent of the member's previous Local Party where that Local Party has ceased to be appropriate in terms of Article 3.2 (a), retain membership of that Local Party. A member who is an MP, MEP, prospective parliamentary or European parliamentary candidate or member of a local authority may re-register as of right in a relevant Local Party.

3.7 Membership may be refused by an enrolling body on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. material disagreement, evidenced by conduct, with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;

- b. the admission of the applicant would be likely to bring the Party into disrepute; or
- c. membership of another political party in Great Britain.

Any person whose membership is refused shall have a right of appeal, which must be made in writing within 14 days of the applicant being advised of the refusal to admit, and which shall be dealt with in accordance with the guidance published under Article 23. Participation in the Party's Registered Supporter Scheme may be refused by the Federal People Development Committee on the grounds set out in (a) and (b). The only right of appeal shall be pursuant to Article 22 on any matter relating to the interpretation of this Constitution.

### 3.8 Membership may be revoked on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. material disagreement, evidenced by conduct, with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;
- b. conduct which has brought, or is likely to bring, the Party into disrepute;
- c. standing against the candidate of the Party in any election to public office;
- d. membership of or support for another political party in Great Britain.
- e. a breach of the standards set out in Article 3.1(b); or
- f. discrimination against another person on the basis of a protected characteristic as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Membership shall not be revoked unless the member has been notified of the grounds on which revocation is to be considered and has been given a reasonable opportunity to reply. Where paragraph (c), (d) or (e) of this Article 3.8 applies, membership shall be automatically and immediately suspended, and in other cases of urgency. The person or body designated in the procedures made under Article 23 may suspend membership while revocation is being considered. If the procedures do not designate such a person or body, the Chair/Convenor of the relevant State Party or their deputy, or for members outside the UK the Federal Board's Chair or Vice-Chairs may suspend membership while revocation is being considered. Any person whose membership is revoked shall have a right of appeal, which must be made in writing within 14 days of the applicant being advised of the revocation, and which shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 23. Any person whose membership is refused shall have a right of appeal, which must be made in writing within 14 days of the applicant being advised of the refusal to admit, and which shall be dealt with in accordance with the guidance published under Article 23. Participation in the Party's Registered Supporter Scheme may be revoked by the Federal People Development Committee on the grounds set out in (a)-(f). The only right of appeal shall be pursuant to Article 22 on any matter relating to the interpretation of this Constitution.

- 3.9
- a. A register of members shall be maintained by each State Party. A register of members resident outside Great Britain shall be maintained by a State Party designated by the Federal Board to act as agent for the Federal Party. Any body entitled to maintain a list of members may use the list for its own internal purposes. The Federal Party shall have direct access to such lists. Any body holding or having access to such lists shall ensure that the information contained in them is not disclosed to any person other than for the proper purposes of the Party. Party bodies shall comply with the directives of the Federal Board in relation to the Party's data protection registration.
  - b. The Federal Party shall maintain a register of participants in the Registered Supporter Scheme, access to which shall be provided to party bodies as required for its efficient and effective operation. Any body holding or having access to such data shall ensure that it is not disclosed to any person other than for the proper purposes of the Party. Party bodies shall comply with the directives of the Federal Board in relation to the Party's data protection registration.

## ARTICLE 4: Local Parties

- 4.1 There shall be Local Parties so far as possible throughout Great Britain. Local Parties may be formed in Northern Ireland or places outside the United Kingdom. Save as provided for in Articles 4.2, 4.3, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12, all matters relating to the formation, operation, suspension or dissolution of Local Parties shall be determined by the Constitutions of the State Parties or by rules made under them, except that where, anywhere in Great Britain, provision is not made in any of these respects by the State Party concerned the relevant parts of the following Articles 4.2 to 4.8 shall apply.
- 4.2 No Local Party shall be formed unless it will, on formation, have at least 30 members.
- 4.3 Save as hereinafter provided, each Local Party in Great Britain shall contain one parliamentary constituency. The members in each of two or more adjacent parliamentary constituencies may agree to combine into a single Local Party, in which case the combined Local Party shall be deemed for all the purposes of this Constitution to be a Local Party, save that the selection of a prospective parliamentary candidate and the adoption of a parliamentary candidate shall be made:
- a. where for any constituency in a Local Party there are 30 or more members, by those members; and
  - b. where for any constituency within a Local Party there are less than 30 members, the Local Party Constitution shall specify whether all the members of the Local Party shall participate or only those from the constituency concerned.
- 4.4 A Local Party containing two or more constituencies may divide into new Local Parties, provided that none of them will have less than 30 members.
- 4.5 The objects of a Local Party in Great Britain shall be to be the successor to the former parties in its area and to promote and support the values and objects of the Party in the constituency or constituencies which it contains and in particular, through its members:
- a. to secure the election of Liberal Democrats as Members of Parliament, UK Members of the European Parliament and members of local and other elected public authorities;
  - b. to admit and actively to recruit new members of the Party and encourage members to renew their membership;
  - c. to participate in the formulation of the policy of the Party;
  - d. to play a full part in the democratic processes of the Party;
  - e. to play a full part in the campaigning activities of the Party at all levels;

- f. to campaign and work with local people to achieve the objectives set out in the preamble to this Constitution; and
  - g. to help all local people, without regard to party or any other factor, to secure their rights and to protect them against oppression.
- 4.6 Each Local Party shall have a constitution, which must comply with the following principles:
- a. the objects shall include those set forth in Article 4.5;
  - b. it must give effect to the provisions of Article 3;
  - c. all elections shall be in accordance with the election rules made under Article 9.9;
  - d. there must be an annual general meeting, and provision for the calling of other general meetings by the executive committee and by requisition of the members; proper accounts and accounting records must be kept as required by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended and must be audited and delivered to the Electoral Commission as required by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, and submitted with an independent report to the annual general meeting for approval; and
  - e. it must ensure compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended.
- 4.7 The constitution of a Local Party is subject to this Constitution and to the constitution of the relevant State Party and, in the event of any conflict between them, this Constitution or as the case may be the constitution of the relevant State Party shall prevail.
- 4.8 A Local Party shall be suspended if its membership has remained below 30 for a continuous period of six months, and shall remain suspended until its membership reaches 30. A Local Party which has been suspended on this ground shall be dealt with by the relevant State Party in accordance with its internal procedures, and shall not while suspended have the rights conferred upon Local Parties by this Constitution.
- 4.9 The rights of a Local Party under this Constitution may be suspended by the relevant State Party in accordance with its internal procedures (or, in the case of a Local Party outside Great Britain, by the Federal Board), if it is not adhering to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended, this (or its own) Constitution or if events have taken place or are about to take place which are or may be seriously detrimental to the Local Party or to the Party as a whole.

- 4.10 The constitution of a Local Party outside Great Britain and any amendment thereto shall be subject to approval by the Federal Board. Such approval may be withheld if the constitution or amendment:
- a. contravenes the principles set out in Article 4.6 or in the preamble to this Constitution or is otherwise in conflict with any of the provisions of this Constitution; or
  - b. is unworkable or defective, or omits or deletes provisions necessary to the proper functioning of the Local Party.
- 4.11 Before suspending a Local Party outside Great Britain, the Federal Board shall draw the attention of the Local Party to the grounds on which it is proposed to take this action, and shall give the Local Party a reasonable time to answer any allegations and/or take any necessary corrective action. A Local Party outside Great Britain which is suspended under Article 4.9 may appeal from that decision as provided by Article 22.
- 4.12 The suspension of a Local Party outside Great Britain may be lifted if the Federal Board is satisfied that corrective action has been taken. During the period of its suspension the powers and functions of the Local Party and its organs shall be exercised subject to and in accordance with the directions of the Federal Board.

## **ARTICLE 5: Party Strategy**

- 5.1 The Federal Board shall have the responsibility periodically, and at least once per Parliament, for preparing a document outlining the Party's strategy, in conjunction with the Leader's political strategy, for submission for debate and agreement by Conference.
- 5.2 The Federal Board shall publicise a timetable for the production of the strategy and its submission for debate by Conference. In preparing the strategy, the Federal Board shall consult widely within the Party, including in particular the Parliamentary Parties (as defined in Article 17), all relevant Federal Committees, the State Parties and Affiliated Organisations.
- 5.3 The Federal Board shall provide a report on its implementation of the strategy over the preceding year and its plans for implementing the strategy over the coming year, including all relevant activities and plans of the Federal Policy Committee, Federal Conference Committee, Federal Finance & Resources Committee, the Federal Communications & Elections Committee, the Federal People Development Committee, Federal International Relations Committee and the Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee, as part of its report to each conference following that in which the strategy is agreed.
- 5.4 The Federal Board shall have the right to receive a report from the Federal Policy Committee and Federal Conference Committee, not more frequently than twice a year, on each committee's contribution to the implementation of the strategy, including its response to any recommendations of the Federal Board, including, as appropriate, reasons for not implementing any such recommendation.

## ARTICLE 6: Conference

- 6.1 The Conference shall consist of party members, but others may be invited to attend in a non-voting role, including Registered Supporters.
- 6.2 The Standing Orders of the Conference shall provide for consultative session.
- 6.3 The Conference shall normally meet twice a year, for a week in the early autumn and a weekend in the early spring; additional meetings may be summoned upon the requisition of the Federal Board or the Federal Policy Committee or the Conference itself or 2% of members, in not less than 10% of local parties. A meeting may be cancelled by the Federal Board in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.4 Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Conference shall be the sovereign representative body of the Party, and shall have power to determine the policy of the Party in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Article 7.
- 6.5 There shall be a business session at each Conference, to which the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary party in the House of Lords, the Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament, the Federal Board, the Federal Policy Committee, Federal Communications and Elections Committee, Federal International Relations Committee, the Federal Council, and the Federal Conference Committee shall report. The business session at the autumn meeting shall constitute the Annual General Meeting of the Party, before which the Annual Report and Accounts shall additionally be laid. The Conference shall have the right to approve or reject each such report, or to refer it back with recommendations. Business motions may be submitted to the Federal Conference by the Federal Board, the Federal Conference Committee or any other persons or bodies entitled to submit motions or amendments under Article 7.6.
- 6.6 The Standing Orders of the Federal Conference shall allow for meetings of Conference or Council of the State Party within whose boundaries the Federal Conference is being held, at the request of that Party, either immediately prior to, or immediately after, the Federal Conference and in the same place as the Federal Conference.
- 6.7 The Conference may resolve to conduct a ballot of all members of the Party on any fundamental question where, in its judgement, the values and objectives of the Party are in issue or it is otherwise in the essential interests of the Party, and shall at the same time as considering the related resolution consider also a statement from the Federal Board as to the financial and administrative implications of such a ballot. Such a ballot shall be in a bilingual form for all members of the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

**ARTICLE 7: The Policy-Making Process**

- 7.1 The Federal Party shall determine the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom.
- 7.2 The State Parties shall by their respective internal procedures determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any State Party may confer upon the Federal Party power to determine policy in any specified area or areas. Policy determined in this way by the Federal Party will not override the policy of those State Parties which have not conferred policy-making power in this area on the Federal Party. Where a State Party has conferred this power upon the Federal Party it shall not itself engage in the determination of policy in the specified area or areas until such time as the power has been revoked by it.
- 7.3 Any body that is not entitled to make policy on any specific issue may discuss and express its views upon it on a consultative basis.
- 7.4 The Federal Policy Committee (FPC), at its own decision or at the instruction of the Federal Conference, may undertake the commissioning, preparation, publication, circulation, and submission to Conference of policy papers, including options in cases where consultation has shown there to be substantial disagreement within the Party. Policy papers shall normally be preceded by consultation papers which shall set out policy options.
- 7.5 In the course of developing policy the FPC shall:
- a. consider policy proposals submitted to it by State Parties, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties, Affiliated Organisations and individual members of the Party; together with the responses to the consultations carried out according to Article 7.5; and
  - b. ensure consultation generally with, including making consultation papers available to members, State Parties, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties and Affiliated Organisations. Such consultations shall include responses to references under Article 7.7.
- 7.6 Policy motions and amendments (including emergency motions and amendments) may be submitted for debate by Federal Conference (in accordance with its Standing Orders) by the Federal Policy Committee, party members, State Parties in accordance with their internal procedures, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties and Affiliated Organisations. Amendments to motions accompanying policy papers may be submitted in the same way.
- 7.7 Subject to the foregoing procedure, all Federal policy papers and motions approved by the Federal Conference shall thereby become the policy of the Federal Party.

- 7.8 The FPC shall prepare (and from time to time revise) statements as to the policy of the Party as produced by the foregoing process together with the provisions of Article 10.1.

**ARTICLE 8: Committees of the Federal Party**

- 8.1 The Committees of the Federal Party shall be the Federal Board, the Federal Policy Committee, the Federal Conference Committee, the Federal People Development Committee, the Federal Finance & Resources Committee, the Federal Communications & Elections Committee, the Federal International Relations Committee and the Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.2 Each Committee may appoint one or more Vice Chairs to stand in for the Chair and to undertake such other tasks as the Committee may from time to time provide.
- 8.3 No person elected by all members of the Party to a Committee of the Federal Party may simultaneously be elected by the same method to any other such Committee.
- 8.4 Any member of a Committee, other than those individually specified in the constitution, who does not attend a meeting for 6 months shall be deemed to have resigned from that Committee.
- 8.5
- a. The term of office for each Committee of the Federal Party shall be three years. All elections to Federal Committees by party members and other Federal Committees shall be governed by this term of office.
  - b. The first meeting of each Federal Committee shall take place no later than three months after the declaration of the results in the triennial election.
  - c. The term of office shall commence from the first meeting of that Committee following a triennial election, save that the Board may decide that the term for those party members which the Board elects to other committees may start up to four months after the first meeting of the Committee, and for those previously elected to continue in post until that date.
- 8.6 The Federal Finance & Resources Committee, the Federal Communications & Elections Committee, the Federal People Development Committee, the Federal International Relations Committee and the Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee shall be accountable to the Federal Board and will report as required by the Federal Board. The Federal Board shall also have regard to the desirability of establishing a subcommittee responsible for the co-ordination of the Party's activities.
- 8.7 The Federal Board, the Federal Conference Committee and the Federal Policy Committee shall each table a written report at each meeting of the Conference, with time given at the conference to debate each report. All other Committees shall report to the Conference as part of the Federal Board's report.

- 8.8 Each Committee of the Federal Party shall make regulations to govern the operation of the Committee and anybody accountable to it. Such regulations must include:
- a. a transparency policy which sets out when discussions of the Committee, and papers submitted to it, shall be confidential and which keeps confidentiality to a necessary minimum;
  - b. provisions for reports to be made to party members after the completion of each full meeting of the Committee, including the responsibility of the Chair to report on the meeting and the Committee's work in a manner deemed practical by the Federal Chief Executive within 14 days of the conclusion of the said meeting;
  - c. a requirement for its members to fulfil obligations in relation to a Conflicts of Interest policy agreed, and from time to time altered, by the Federal Board and administered as one central register for all Federal Committees by the Chief Executive. That policy shall require any member and any other person attending a meeting to declare any interest which might affect or be seen to affect their contribution to the work of that body, and in particular to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest or loyalty.
  - d. provision for any sub-committees or other groups established under Article 8.11 also to have regulations covering the above three areas; and
  - e. provision for:
    - i. the election by the committee of a chair (unless specified elsewhere in this constitution) and, if the committee so chooses, one or more Vice Chairs;
    - ii. limits on the number of terms officers of the committee can serve sequentially (this provision does not apply to the Leader or President).
- 8.9 The Federal Chief Executive shall make arrangements for the attendance of Party staff at meetings of Federal Committees who shall support the Committees and report to the Federal Chief Executive's management team.
- 8.10 The Federal Chief Executive shall be responsible for maintaining and making available to party members an up-to-date copy of this Constitution and any regulations made under any Article in it. At their discretion, this may also include rules from other parts of the Party.
- 8.11 Each Committee shall have the power by regulation to establish sub-committees and other groups which shall be accountable to it. They may also by mutual agreement and by agreed regulations establish such subcommittees or other groups jointly with other Committees and may include representatives of State Parties on such bodies subject to their agreement.

- 8.12 Any regulation establishing a sub-committee or other group shall normally set out terms of reference for that body, including the purpose of that body; its duties and powers; its accountability and reporting arrangements; its members and chair; any term limits for the body and its members; and administrative arrangements including where appropriate the member of staff responsible for providing support and reporting to the Federal Chief Executive and management team.
- 8.13 In all their work, committees and other bodies shall have full regard for the diversity of the Party, including in any appointments, co-options and quotas agreed by the Party. The chair of each such committee and body shall be responsible for promoting such diversity.

## ARTICLE 9: The Federal Board

- 9.1 There shall be a Federal Board ("FB"), which shall be responsible for directing, co-ordinating and overseeing the implementation of the Party's strategy and the work of the Federal Party.
- 9.2 It shall consist of the following voting members:
- a. The President, who shall act as its Chair;
  - b. The Leader;
  - c. The Chair of the English Party, the Convenor of the Scottish Party and the President of the Welsh Party;
  - d. The Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities;
  - e. Three people who shall be party members elected by all members of the Party except that persons who, at the date of the close of nominations for election under this paragraph, are members of Parliamentary Parties set out in Article 17 shall not be eligible to be candidates for election under this paragraph. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations;
  - f. A Vice-Chair of the Federal Policy Committee;
  - g. The Chairs of the Federal Conference Committee, the Federal Communications and Elections Committee, the Federal Finance and Resources Committee and the Federal People Development Committee;
  - h. The Chair of the Young Liberals; and
  - i. A principal local authority councillor, elected Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner, elected by the principal local authority councillors, elected Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners of the Party.

Voting members under a-d or f-i may nominate a voting substitute if they are unable to attend a meeting.

- 9.3 The Board shall invite other appropriate people to attend its meetings for relevant agenda items, including but not limited to inviting the Chief Executive, the Financial Controller for items with significant financial implications, a staff representative for issues likely to have a significant impact on party staff, the chairs of other Federal Committees and also invite the chairs of any Board sub-groups, sub-committees or working groups to submit reports in writing and to give reports in person as appropriate. Subcommittees for items that interact with their remit, and the Chief Whip in the House of Commons (or their nominee) for items with Parliamentary or Parliamentary Office of the Liberal Democrats impact. The Board shall also invite the chairs of the Federal International Relations Committee and of any Board sub-groups, sub-committees or working groups to submit reports in writing and to give reports in person as appropriate.

- 9.4 The Federal Board may co-opt people for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than two persons co-opted at any time).
- 9.5 The Federal Board shall meet at least four times in each calendar year.
- 9.6 Following each election for the European Parliament and the House of Commons, the Federal Board shall commission a report on the Party's work in that election and shall report to the Party on the outcomes of that review. It shall report on its work, including the work of all committees and other bodies responsible to it, to each meeting of the Conference.
- 9.7 The Federal Board shall have power to establish a company limited by guarantee to acquire, hold and dispose of such assets of the Federal Party as the Federal Board may from time to time direct and to undertake such work as the Federal Board may from time to time decide. The Members of any such Company shall be the President, the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, and the Chair of the FFRC. The directors shall present an Annual Report to Conference.
- 9.8 The Federal Board shall have the power to grant indemnities for the general purposes of the Party and to secure grants of indemnity given, in such a manner as it thinks fit upon the assets of the Party; provided always that the total amount of the terms of the indemnities, shall not exceed such amount as may from time to time be determined by the Federal Board and approved by the Federal Conference.
- 9.9 The Federal Board shall have power, after appropriate consultations and subject to ratification by the Conference, to make and from time to time vary rules as to:
- a. membership, subject to the provisions under Article 3;
  - b. criteria for Affiliated Organisation status and for the regular review of bodies holding such status;
  - c. party elections, with any such rules providing for the use of STV (or, in the case of a single person vacancy, the Alternative Vote) and the secret ballot;
  - d. compliance with any statutory or regulatory provisions that are relevant to the party's activities, including the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act and the relevant data protection legislation; and
  - e. such other matters as it may consider necessary or desirable to give effect to or supplement the provisions of this Constitution.
- 9.10 The right of staff to join or not to join, an appropriate Trades Union shall be recognised.

- 9.11 The Federal Board may, at the request of the Federal Policy Committee or of its own accord, and having considered the financial and administrative implications, resolve to conduct a consultative ballot of all members of the Party on any fundamental question where, in its judgement, the values and objectives of the Party are in issue or it is otherwise in the essential interests of the Party. Such a consultative ballot shall be in a bilingual form for all members of the Welsh Liberal Democrats.
- 9.12 There shall be a Federal Council which shall consist of the following voting members:
- a. Twenty-one people who shall be party members elected by all members of the Party except that persons who, at the date of the close of nominations for election under this paragraph, are members of Parliamentary Parties set out in Article 17 shall not be eligible to be candidates for election under this paragraph. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations;
  - b. Three members from each State Party, elected according to their own procedures;
  - c. Three principal local authority councillors, elected Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners, elected by the principal local authority councillors, elected Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners of the Party;
  - d. Three members of the Young Liberals, elected according to their own procedures;
  - e. Three representatives of the Parliamentary Group as set out in Article 17.5; and
  - f. The Chair of the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- 9.13 The Chair of the Federal Council shall be elected by its members.
- 9.14 Members of the Federal Board may attend and speak at meetings of the Federal Council but may not be voting members of the Federal Council.
- 9.15 The Council shall be responsible for scrutinising the work of the Federal Board, including ensuring that decisions are being taken in line with the party strategy as voted for by Conference, and may require a response on any issue from the Board.
- 9.16 The members of the Federal Council shall be sent the Board agenda, decisions and relevant papers. Within five working days of the publication of the decisions any 13 members can request that the Chair of the Federal Council call in any decision by the Federal Board to a meeting of the full Federal Council.

The President of the Party will be required to attend this meeting and can bring any others they feel relevant in order to speak in favour of the decision. Any decision of the Federal Board called in can be overturned by a vote in favour by at least 27 members of the Federal Council.

- 9.17 The Council shall be considered to be a Committee of the Federal Party for the purposes of Articles 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 8.2, 8.5, 8.8 and 8.9.

## ARTICLE 10: The Federal Policy Committee

- 10.1 There shall be a Federal Policy Committee ("FPC"), which shall be responsible to the Federal Conference and shall have the duty of researching and developing policy and of overseeing the policy-making process in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Article 7. It shall also be responsible for:
- a. presenting the views of the Party to outside bodies, including political parties and groupings in the European community and elsewhere;
  - b. consulting outside bodies in relation to proposed policies of the Federal Party;
  - c. approving official policy publications of the Federal Party;
  - d. making interim policy on topical issues, subject always to this policy remaining the policy of the Federal Party only if it is approved by the first appropriate meeting of Conference on the basis of a motion to approve a report covering all such interim policy submitted to it by the FPC; and
  - e. making detailed policy of the kind needed to implement the principles and broad policy outlines contained in a policy paper or motion that has already been adopted by Conference.

The FPC shall submit an annual report for approval or amendment to Conference at its autumn meeting on its programme of policy development.

- 10.2 The FPC shall consist of the following:
- i. voting members:
    - a. the Leader who shall act as its Chair;
    - b. six members of the Parliamentary Group as defined in Article 17.5, normally including at least one from each Parliamentary Party;
    - c. the President;
    - d. one person elected by the Federal Communications & Elections Committee from amongst its membership;
    - e. two principal local authority councillors, elected by principal local authority councillors of the Party from among their own number (including, for both purposes, Police and Crime Commissioners and directly elected Mayors);
    - f. one representative of each State Party, elected by its internal procedures (State Parties may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FPC);
    - g. one more person than the total number elected or appointed under paragraphs (a) to (f) above, who shall be party members elected by all members of the Party except that persons who, at the date of close of nominations for election under this paragraph, are members of any of the Parliamentary Parties listed in Article 17 shall not be eligible to be

candidates for election under this paragraph. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations; and

- h. one representative of the Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students, elected by its own procedures (the Youth and Student Affiliated Organisation may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FPC).
- ii. non-voting members:
  - a. the Chair of the Federal Conference Committee; and
  - b. one representative of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Local Government Association appointed through their internal procedures.

The Federal Policy Committee thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

- 10.3 The FPC shall have the responsibility for preparing the Party's General Election manifesto for the UK and its manifesto for elections to the European Parliament in consultation with the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and with the Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament. It shall have the right to be consulted upon, and in the case of a conflict (but after consultation with the State Party concerned) to override any proposal to be contained in the General Election manifesto of any State or Regional Party unless the proposal relates solely to an issue which is the specific concern of the State or Regional Party.
- 10.4 The FPC shall have the power from time to time to set up policy working groups (whose members need not be members of the FPC) of which it shall appoint a chair and, in consultation with that chair, the membership, with such terms of reference as it may think fit (which shall include the like obligations of consultation as those set forth in Article 7.5(b)). The FPC shall be under similar obligations of consultation in relation to the composition of a proposed group.

## ARTICLE 11: The Federal Conference Committee

11.1 There shall be a Federal Conference Committee ("FCC") which shall be responsible for organising the Conference. It shall be subject to the control of the Federal Board in matters of financial and other resources. Standing Orders for the Conference shall be made by the Conference Committee subject to the approval of the Conference.

11.2 The Conference Committee shall consist of:

- i. Voting members:
  - a. the President;
  - b. the Chief Whip of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons or their substitute from within the Parliamentary Group as defined in Article 17.5;
  - c. one representative of each State Party, elected by its internal procedures (State Parties may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FCC);
  - d. one representative of the Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students, elected by its own procedures (the Youth and Student Affiliated Organisation may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FCC);
  - e. one person elected by the Federal Board from amongst its members;
  - f. two persons elected by the Federal Policy Committee from amongst its members;
  - g. one person elected by the Federal Communications & Elections Committee from amongst its members;
  - h. one person elected by the Federal People Development Committee from amongst its members; and
  - i. 12 persons elected by party members. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations.
- ii. Non-voting members:
  - a. the Federal Chief Executive;
  - b. one representative of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee; and
  - c. one representative of the staff employed by the Federal Party or by the Parliamentary Parties and elected by such staff.

The Conference Committee thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

- 11.3 The Federal Conference Committee, in organising the Conference, shall have due regard to the balance of state and federal policy debates in the final agenda of the Conference and in particular shall as far as possible organise the Agenda so that all matters which relate to one or more state parties but not all state parties or the Federal Party shall be considered at either the beginning or the end of the Conference.

## ARTICLE 12: The Federal Finance & Resources Committee

- 12.1 There shall be a Federal Finance and Resources Committee ("FFRC") which shall be responsible to the Federal Board for:
- a. planning and administering the budget and finances of the Federal Party for the forthcoming year and in outline for following years;
  - b. presenting the audited Annual Accounts to the Conference;
  - c. overseeing the administration of the Federal Party including its Chief Executive, headquarters and other staff; and overseeing the role of the Party as an equal opportunities employer and the maintenance of staff grievance and disciplinary procedures; and
  - d. overseeing the Party's compliance with external regulatory bodies, including the Electoral Commission and the Information Commissioner and carrying out the responsibilities established in Articles 9.9 and 20.3 of this Constitution in relation to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended.

The Committee shall report regularly to the Federal Board.

- 12.2 It shall consist of:
- a. the Chair of the FFRC who shall be appointed by the Federal Board;
  - b. the Federal Treasurer;
  - c. the President;
  - d. the person registered with the Electoral Commission as the registered Federal Treasurer for each State Party under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended. (State Parties may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FFRC);
  - e. the Federal Chief Executive;
  - f. one representative of the staff employed by the Federal Party and by the Parliamentary Parties and elected by such staff;
  - g. one representative of the Parliamentary Office of the Liberal Democrats ("POLD") appointed according to their own procedures; and
  - h. five persons elected by the Federal Board. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations.

The FFRC thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

- 12.3 The Committee shall meet at least four times in each calendar year.

- 12.4 Subject to agreement by the Federal Board, the FFRC shall have the power to borrow money for the general purposes of the Federal Party and to secure any monies borrowed in such a manner as it thinks fit upon the assets of the Federal Party: provided always that the total amount of monies borrowed shall not exceed such amount as may from time to time be determined by the Federal Board and approved by the Federal Conference.
- 12.5 The FFRC shall prepare budgets to deliver the strategy of the Party and shall consult fully with the Federal Board, State Parties and, as appropriate, Affiliated Organisations before submitting its draft budget for the Federal Board's approval.
- 12.6 The FFRC shall each year make proposals to the FB on the minimum rate or rates of subscription for the ensuing year and the proportion of subscription income which each State Party and overseas Local Party shall remit to the Federal Party. The FB shall submit proposals to Conference which shall determine those matters.

A higher recommended rate or rates of subscription may also be determined by the same procedure. Nothing in this Constitution shall prevent a State Party from setting a recommended rate or rates of subscription by its internal procedures which is higher than that agreed by the Federal Conference under this Article.

## **ARTICLE 13: The Federal Communications and Elections Committee**

13.1 There shall be a Federal Communications & Elections Committee (FCEC) which shall be accountable to the Federal Board and shall report to each ordinary meeting of the Board. The Committee shall oversee the implementation of the Party's strategy in relation to elections, campaigns and communications.

13.2 The Committee shall consist of:

- i. Voting members:
  - a. the Chair of the Committee who shall be elected by the Federal Board;
  - b. the President;
  - c. the Leader, who may nominate a substitute who shall have the power to vote;
  - d. the Chief Whip of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, or their substitute from within the Parliamentary Group as defined in Article 17.5;
  - e. two representatives of the Parliamentary Group as defined in Article 17.5;
  - f. one person nominated by the Affiliated Organisation representing councillors;
  - g. one person appointed by each State Party according to their internal procedures, who will normally be the Chair of the relevant Committee of that State Party; and
  - h. two members elected by the Federal Board from among its members. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations.
- ii. Non-voting members:
  - a. the Chief Executive of the Party as defined in Article 20.5; and
  - b. the Chief Executive of ALDC.

The FCEC thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

13.3 The Committee shall be responsible for the organisation of all elections for the House of Commons and the European Parliament and the Chair of the FCEC shall chair any group responsible for the management of those elections.

- 13.4 The Committee shall manage as one of its functions a Joint Candidates Sub-Committee (“JCSC”), which shall comprise:
- a. the Chair of the JCSC who shall be appointed by the FCEC;
  - b. one representative, with a power of substitution, from each of the State Candidates Committees;
  - c. one person elected by the FCEC from amongst its members;
  - d. the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities; and
  - e. the Chief Whip in the House of Commons.
- 13.5 The JCSC shall set the standards and processes for, and maintain oversight of, the Party’s readiness to train and field candidates in all elections to the Westminster and European Parliaments as well as any public elections to the House of Lords or its successor. In order to do this, for these elections the JCSC’s functions shall be:
- a. to make provision for there to be lists of approved candidates;
  - b. to maintain and publish criteria for approval and to ensure, so far as possible, their consistent application;
  - c. to make and from time-to-time to vary rules for the selection and adoption of prospective candidates, including provisions for deselection;
  - d. to co-ordinate and regulate the procedure for the selection and adoption of candidates;
  - e. to provide training for Returning Officers, approved candidates and selected candidates;
  - f. To develop and implement candidate diversity action plans, led by the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities; and
  - g. To produce clearly communicated, realistic workload expectations, including a comprehensive schedule and pathway at every seat level, set out clearly in the candidates’ compact.

In carrying out these roles, it shall consult with State Candidates Committees.

In carrying out its role under (d), the JCSC shall establish a Consultative Group, including representatives from each State Candidates Committee, who may include one or more Chairs of Candidate Committees created by Regional Parties. The Consultative Group shall offer advice to the JCSC, and the JCSC shall respond to any advice offered.

- 13.6 In accordance with Article 19.5, the JCSC may instruct a State Candidates Committee to take appropriate action or may take over its functions if the Federal Board so decides, after due consultation with the relevant State Party.

13.7 The FCEC report to conference shall include the work of the JCSC.

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**ARTICLE 14: The Federal People Development Committee**

- 14.1 There shall be a Federal People Development Committee (FPDC), which shall be accountable to the Federal Board and shall report regularly to it.
- 14.2 The functions of the FPDC, working with State Parties and other Party bodies as appropriate, shall be:
- a. Coordinating, planning and supervising the training strategy for the Federal Party;
  - b. Coordinating, planning and supervising the diversity engagement strategy for the Party;
  - c. Coordinating, planning and supervising the membership recruitment, retention and activation strategy for the party; and
  - d. Working with Affiliated Organisations as set out in Article 21 to support them in recruiting and maintaining membership and implementing the Party's policies on diversity.
  - e. Making regulations governing the Registered Supporter Scheme, supervising the administration and the promotion of the Scheme, notifying such regulations to the Conference and publishing them on the Party website.
- 14.3 The Committee shall comprise:
- a. the President;
  - b. the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities
  - c. the Chairs of those Affiliated Organisations which represent under-represented groups and the Chair of the Affiliated Organisation which represents youth and/or students, each of whom may nominate a substitute who shall have the power to vote;
  - d. six members elected by the Federal Board, one of whom shall be elected by members as Chair. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations;
  - e. one person nominated by each State Party according to its internal procedures;
  - f. the Chair of the Campaign for Gender Balance; and
  - g. the Chair of the Racial Diversity Campaign
- The FPDC thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).
- 14.4 The FPDC shall meet at least four times in each calendar year.

- 14.5 The FPDC shall establish a sub-committee which shall include 2 representatives from each State Party and shall co-ordinate the promotion of membership throughout the United Kingdom.
- 14.6 The FPDC shall also have regard to the desirability of establishing sub-committees responsible for diversity; training; and membership recruitment, retention and activation each of which shall contain relevant representatives from each State Party appointed by their own procedures.

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**ARTICLE 15: The Federal International Relations Committee**

15.1 There shall be a Federal International Relations Committee ("FIRC") which shall be responsible to the Federal Board for:

- a. generally managing the Party's relationships with like-minded parties and individuals in other countries and international institutions, including managing the Party's relations with the European and international organisations of which the Party is a member and the Party's participation in their meetings and events;
- b. overseeing the Party's relationship with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and projects arising therefrom;
- c. advising the Party, including the Parliamentary Parties as set out in Article 17, on European and international policy;
- d. advising the Party on campaigning for European Parliament elections and other organisational matters which relate to the Party's international work;
- e. overseeing the organisation and provision of training for like-minded parties and individuals outside the UK.

15.2 The Committee shall consist of:

- i. Voting members:
  - a. one person elected by the Federal Board from amongst its members;
  - b. one person elected by the Federal Policy Committee from amongst its members;
  - c. one person elected by each State Party according to its internal procedures;
  - d. one person elected by the Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students;
  - e. one person elected by Members of the European Parliament as set out in clause 17.4.
  - f. one person representing Foreign Affairs spokespeople in the Westminster Parliament; and
  - g. eight members who shall be elected by all members of the Party. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations.
- ii. Non-voting members:
  - a. one representative of the Liberal International British Group;
  - b. the representative of the Liberal Democrat European Group;
  - c. one representative of Liberal Democrats Abroad and
  - d. any member of the Bureaux of the Liberal International or the Alliance of Liberals & Democrats in Europe or the Parliamentary Assembly of

the Council of Europe who is currently a member of the Liberal Democrats and normally resident in the UK.

The Chair of the Committee shall be elected by the Committee from amongst the members elected under Article 15.2(i)(g) above.

The FIRC thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding three years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

15.3 The Committee shall meet at least four times in each calendar year

## ARTICLE 16: The Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee

- 16.1 There shall be a Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee (FASC) which shall be responsible to the Federal Board and shall report regularly to it.
- 16.2 The FASC shall be responsible for commissioning the Party's auditors and for representing the Party in any matters arising from the annual external audit. It shall report through the Federal Board to Conference including comment on the annual audited financial statements. It may also commission and oversee internal audit work related to the work of the Federal Party either on its own initiative or as requested by the Federal Board. It shall oversee the Party's risk management operations and its Risk Register. It shall oversee the Party's Major Donations Protocol and the operation of the Party's Legacy Fund, ensuring that the wishes of testators are fully respected and in line with direction by the Federal Board.
- 16.3 It shall comprise:
- a. Six members, who shall be appointed by the Federal Board. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in the same way. Members appointed under this clause may not have held office or been a member of any other Federal Committee or a member of Federal Party staff during the two years preceding their nomination to the Committee.
  - b. The following shall also be invited to attend meetings of the committee, but shall not have the right to vote:
    - i. the President;
    - ii. the Leader, who may nominate a substitute to act on their behalf;
    - iii. the Federal Treasurer;
    - iv. the Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee.

The Chair of the FASC shall be elected from amongst the members appointed under Article 16.3(a) above.

- 16.4 The Committee shall meet at least four times in each calendar year.

## ARTICLE 17: The Parliamentary Parties

- 17.1 The Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons shall consist of all Members of that House in receipt of the Party's whip. Its Leader shall be the Leader of the Party elected as provided in Article 18. It shall be entitled to make such regulations (not being inconsistent with this Constitution) as it thinks fit for the conduct of its own proceedings. In particular, these regulations shall make provision for a Chief Whip and, if thought fit, a Deputy Leader of such Parliamentary Party.
- 17.2 Should the post of Leader become vacant before the election of a new Leader, the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons or, if no such post exists, the Chief Whip of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, shall assume the post of Acting Leader of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons until the new Leader is elected.
- 17.3 The Parliamentary Party in the House of Lords shall consist of all members of that House in receipt of the Party's whip. It shall be entitled to make such regulations (not being inconsistent with this Constitution) as it thinks fit for the conduct of its own proceedings, which shall make provision for a Leader and a Chief Whip of such Parliamentary Party.
- 17.4 The Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament shall consist of all members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies from within the United Kingdom and in receipt of the UK Liberal Democrat Whip. It shall be entitled to make such regulations (not being inconsistent with this Constitution) as it thinks fit for the conduct of its own proceedings.
- 17.5 For the purposes of representation on Federal Committees, the Parliamentary Parties listed in Article 17 shall form the Parliamentary Group. The Chief Whips of each Parliamentary Party shall agree how many places each Parliamentary Party shall occupy on each Federal Committee, having due regard to the size of each Parliamentary Party.

**ARTICLE 18: The Leader**

- 18.1 The Leader of the Party shall be elected by the members of the Party in accordance with election rules made pursuant to Article 9.9.
- 18.2 An election for the Leader shall be called upon:
- a. the Leader asking for an election;
  - b. the death or incapacity of the Leader;
  - c. the Leader ceasing to be a Member of the House of Commons (other than a temporary cessation by reason of a dissolution);
  - d. the receipt by the President of the resignation of the Leader or of a declaration of intent to resign upon the election of a new Leader;
  - e. a vote of no confidence in the Leader being passed by a majority of all Members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons;
  - f. the receipt by the President of a requisition submitted by at least 75 Local Parties (including for this purpose, the Affiliated Organisation or Organisations representing youth and/or students) following the decision of a quorate general meeting; or
  - g. the first anniversary of the preceding general election being reached without an election being called under any of paragraphs (a) through (f), provided that:
    - i. the Federal Board may postpone such an election for no more than one year by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting; and
    - ii. this paragraph (g) shall not apply if the Leader is a member of the Government.
- 18.3 Upon election, the Leader shall hold office until death, incapacity or resignation or the completion of an election called under this Article.
- 18.4 Upon the calling of an election, the Federal Board shall publish a timetable for nominations, withdrawals, despatch and receipt of ballot papers and the holding of ballots and shall appoint a disinterested person or body to receive and count the ballot papers.
- 18.5 Nominations must be of a Member of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, who must be proposed by at least ten percent of other members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and supported by 200 members in aggregate in not less than 20 Local Parties (including, for this purpose, the Affiliated Organisations representing youth and students) and must indicate acceptance of nomination.

- 18.6 Should the post of Leader become vacant before the election of a new Leader, the Acting Leader of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and the President of the Party shall jointly assume the responsibilities of Leader of the Party until the new Leader is elected.

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**ARTICLE 19: Parliamentary Candidates**

19.1 Each State Party shall establish a Candidates Committee in order to carry out its responsibilities for elections to the Westminster and European Parliaments as well as any elections to the House of Lords or its successor, including implementing the requirements set under Article 13.5. These Candidates Committees shall also have responsibility for candidate approval and selection for elections to any devolved Parliament or Senedd within the State Party's area.

19.2 In deciding whether to enter an applicant on a list, each State Candidates Committee shall follow the requirements set under Article 13.5 and shall take into account:

- a. the support shown by the applicant for the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;
- b. the previous participation by the applicant in the work of the Party, both generally and within the relevant State, as well as their previous participation in other walks of life;
- c. the need to ensure that the list contains a reasonable balance between both sexes and different age groups, and includes representatives of different social and economic groups and of ethnic minorities; and
- d. such other considerations as may be relevant in the circumstances.

19.3 The name of any person may only be removed from a list by the relevant State Candidates Committee by following the requirements set under Article 13.5 and if:

- a. the Committee has reason to believe that such person:
  - i. no longer supports the fundamental values or objectives of the Party;
  - ii. has behaved (whether personally or in connection with the affairs of the Party) in such a way as to be unsuitable to serve in the public office for which they have been approved as a candidate; or
  - iii. is unfit, through ill health or otherwise, to conduct an election campaign or to serve in the public office for which they have been approved as a candidate;
- b. the outcome of a complaints procedure recommends it;
- c. the person requests it; or
- d. the Committee is satisfied that it would for any other sufficient reason be contrary to the interests of the Party for that person to remain on the list.

Any person removed from a list by the relevant State Candidates Committee under grounds (a) or (d) above shall have a right of appeal, which must be made in writing within 14 days of the applicant being advised of the removal,

and which shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 23. Any person whose membership is refused shall have a right of appeal, which must be made in writing within 14 days of the applicant being advised of the refusal to admit, and which shall be dealt with in accordance with the guidance published under Article 23.

- 19.4 The rules for the selection of Westminster candidates made by the JCSC shall comply with the following requirements:
- a. they shall provide for the appointment of a returning officer;
  - b. only persons whose names are on the list of approved candidates of that State Party can be selected;
  - c. adequate notice of the commencement of the selection process in each constituency must be given;
  - d. there must be a procedure for the short-listing of applicants;
  - e. short-listing shall be carried out by the executive committee of the Local Party or by a short listing sub-committee appointed by it;
  - f. except where a special reselection process is permitted for a sitting MP or the previous candidate, all short-lists must include a specified minimum number of candidates;
  - g. a system will be put in place to secure adequate representation of groups having protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010;
  - h. the Local Party shall arrange one or more (having regard to the geography of the constituency) hustings meetings at which all short-listed applicants shall be invited to speak and answer questions;
  - i. the electorate for selection ("the eligible voters") shall subject to the provisions of Article 4.3 be the members of the Local Party at a specified date not later than the closing date for submission of applications;
  - j. there shall be sent to each such member by a specified time (which must not be less than seven days) before the first hustings meeting:
    - i. the names of the short-listed applicants and such information about themselves as may be authorised by the rules;
    - ii. notice of the time and place of the hustings meetings;
    - iii. notice as to how ballot papers and/or electronic voting instructions will be distributed, including if applicable how to apply for a postal vote.
  - k. a procedure shall be provided for the removal of a candidate who has lost the confidence of the Local Party concerned.

- 19.5 The requirements of Article 19.4 may be modified so far as necessary to accelerate selection if a general or by-election has been called or appears likely to be called in the immediate future.
- 19.6 If, following the selection of a prospective Parliamentary candidate, there is an actual or prospective vacancy in the seat, such selection shall cease to have effect and a new selection process shall take place to select a prospective candidate for the by-election.
- 19.7 The rules shall provide that, if a sitting MP indicates a wish to stand at the next General Election:
- a. a general meeting of the Local Party shall be called and, if the MP is endorsed at the meeting by a majority of those members present and voting by secret ballot, the MP shall thereby be reselected; and
  - b. if the resolution is defeated, the MP may request a ballot of all members of the Local Party, and shall be reselected if the proposition is supported by a majority of those voting.

The Chair of the Local Party may (but not within the first two years of a Parliament unless there is a serious possibility of an early election) require the MP to indicate within one month whether or not the MP wishes to stand at the next General Election.

- 19.8 The rules for selecting the lists of candidates made by the JCSC for European Parliamentary Electoral Regions shall comply with the following requirements:
- a. they shall provide for the appointment of a returning officer;
  - b. only persons whose names are on the list of approved candidates of that State Party can be selected;
  - c. adequate notice of the commencement of the selection process in each region must be given;
  - d. there must be a procedure for the short-listing of applicants;
  - e. short-listing shall be carried out by a sub-committee approved by the Regional / State (in Wales & Scotland) Executive(s) of the Euro Region(s), known as the Selection Committee;
  - f. all short-lists must include more than enough applicants to fill all the vacancies on the list;
  - g. a system will be put in place to secure adequate representation of groups having protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010;
  - h. the Selection Committee shall arrange one or more (having regard to the geography of the region(s)) hustings meetings at which all short-listed applicants shall be invited to speak and answer questions;
  - i. the electorate for the selection (“the eligible voters”) shall be members of the Local Parties which make up the European Parliamentary

Electoral Region at a specified date not later than the closing date for submission of applications;

- j. the candidates to be included on each list will be determined using STV, as provided in the current edition of "How to conduct an election by the Single Transferable Vote", published by the Electoral Reform Society. The order in which the candidates will appear on the list will be determined by selection rules which supplement the Electoral Reform Society's STV rules. The makeup and ordering of the list may be constrained to accommodate gender balance requirements specified by the selection rules of the State Party;
- k. a provision shall be provided for the removal of a candidate who has lost the confidence of the Regional/State Party/Parties concerned and also the replacement of a candidate who has withdrawn, after the list has been announced.

**ARTICLE 20: Officers**

- 20.1 The President shall be the principal public representative of the Party and shall chair the Federal Board. The President shall be elected by the members of the Party for a term of three years starting from 1st January in the year immediately following the election and shall hold office until death, incapacity, resignation or the election of a successor; the President shall be eligible for re-election once only. A candidate for the office of President shall require the nomination of not fewer than 200 members in not less than 20 Local Parties (including, for this purpose, the Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students). The President shall report to the annual meeting of the Conference and may make reports to any other meetings of Conference. The Federal Board shall have the power, in the event of a casual vacancy, to elect an Acting President from any of the Vice-Presidents and to determine a convenient date for a ballot to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the term, except that if the remainder of the term is less than twelve months, the successor shall serve for the remainder of the term plus a period of three years thereafter.
- 20.2 The Federal Board shall have power to vote on a motion of no confidence in the party's President. Such a vote may only be taken with at least seven days notice to all Board members and shall require a two-thirds majority of voting Board members (with vacancies, abstentions or absences counted as votes against). If the vote passes, a casual vacancy shall be deemed to have occurred and the processes in Article 20.1 shall be followed. The President deemed to have vacated office in this way shall have the right to seek nomination in the subsequent election. If they win re-election, this shall not count as a re-election for the purposes of the term limit in Article 20.1, and they shall not be eligible to be subject to a further vote of no-confidence for the remainder of that term.
- 20.3 The Vice Presidents of the Party shall be:
- a. the Chair of the English Liberal Democrats
  - b. the Convenor of the Scottish Liberal Democrats
  - c. the Chair of the NEC of the Welsh Liberal Democrats
  - d. a Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, elected by the members of the Party for a term of three years starting from 1st January in the year immediately following the election and shall hold office until death, incapacity, resignation or the election of a successor; this Vice President shall be eligible for re-election once only.
- 20.4 The Chair of the FFRC, who shall be responsible for the overall budget and finances of the Party, shall be its treasurer for the purposes of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and shall be responsible for its compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended, shall be elected for a term of three years by the Federal

Board and shall, upon election, become a member of any fund-raising committee established by the Federal Board.

- 20.5 The Federal Treasurer, who shall be responsible for fund-raising, shall be elected by the Federal Board and shall serve for a term of three years and shall, upon election, become a member of the FFRC and chair of any fund-raising committee established by the Federal Board.
- 20.6 The Federal Board shall appoint a salaried chief executive.
- 20.7 The Federal Board shall appoint a nominating officer for the purposes of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and as later amended.

**ARTICLE 21: Affiliated Organisations**

- 21.1 Any organisation of persons having a common interest which satisfies the following criteria:
- a. It has a membership policy which conforms to the principles in Article 3.1 of the Federal Constitution;
  - b. Its objects are consistent with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;
  - c. Its internal procedures conform with the democratic principles in Article 4.6 (c),(d) and (e); and
  - d. Its internal procedures conform to any rules created under Article 9.9(b).

may apply to the Federal Party or a State Party by the internal procedures of that State Party to become an Affiliated Organisation. The Federal Party, or relevant State Party, may confer such status by their procedures. A list of Affiliated Organisations currently recognised by the Federal Party will be maintained by the Federal People and Development Committee and published on the party's website. State Parties may make similar arrangements.

- 21.2 The Federal Board shall from time to time review the operation of Affiliated Organisations in the light of the principles and practices established by and pursuant to this Constitution and shall report to the Conference on such reviews.
- 21.3 Affiliated Organisations shall have the rights granted to them under the Constitution, and relevant rules made thereunder, of the body responsible for the granting of their Affiliated Organisation status. The rights of an Affiliated Organisation under this, or relevant State Party's, Constitution may be suspended by the Federal Board, or relevant State Party, in accordance with internal procedures, if:
- a. It is not compliant with any statutory or regulatory provisions that are relevant to the party's activities, including the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act and as later amended and the relevant data protection legislation;
  - b. It is not compliant with this, or its own, Constitution or the rules made thereunder; or
  - c. if events have taken place or are about to take place which are or may be seriously detrimental to the Affiliated Organisation or to the Party as a whole.
- 21.4 Before suspending the rights of an Affiliated Organisation, the Federal Board, or relevant State Party, shall draw the attention of the Affiliated Organisation to the grounds on which it is proposed to take this action, and shall give the Affiliated Organisation a reasonable time to answer any allegations and/or take any necessary corrective action. An Affiliated Organisation which is

suspended under Article 21.3 may appeal from that decision as provided by Article 22 or, if an Affiliated Organisation of a State Party, via that State Party's appeals procedures.

21.5 The suspension of an Affiliated Organisation may be lifted if the Federal Board, or relevant State Party, is satisfied that corrective action has been taken. During the period of its suspension the powers and functions of the Affiliated Organisation and its organs shall be exercised subject to and in accordance with the directions of the Federal Board, or relevant State Party.

21.6 An Affiliated Organisation will have its status as an Affiliated Organisation revoked if one of the following sets of conditions are met:

i. Removal

- a. The Federal Board, or the relevant State Party, has suspended the Affiliated Organisation; and
- b. The Federal Board's intended removal of Affiliated Organisation status has been reported in the Federal Board's written report to Conference under Article 8.7 or the State Party's intention has been reported to its members by their own procedures;

OR

ii. Resignation

- a. The Affiliated Organisation, through its own procedures and notifying the Federal Board, or relevant State Party, has resigned its Affiliated status.

21.7 For the purposes of exercising the rights conferred on Affiliated Organisations by this Constitution and rules made under it:

- a. The Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students shall have the same rights as a Local Party;
- b. ALDC shall have the same rights as an Affiliated Organisation; and
- c. An organisation listed in the Annexe to this Constitution shall until 31st December 2022 continue to exercise the rights it previously enjoyed as a Specified Associated Organisation or an Associated Organisation, and be subject to the duties and obligations including but not limited to suspension and removal, as applied on August 1st 2021. This article shall not apply to any organisation that becomes an Affiliated Organisation.

21.8 The recognition by the Party of Affiliated Organisations shall not prejudice the independence of such organisations.

**ARTICLE 22: Resolution of Conflicts**

22.1 There shall be a Federal Appeals Panel, which shall consist of 18 members chosen as follows:

- a. Nine chosen by the Federal Board subject to confirmation by the Federal Conference. Each name shall be presented individually to Conference for confirmation. If any name is rejected by Conference, that name may not be re-presented to Conference for confirmation until at least eighteen months have elapsed; and
- b. three chosen by each State Party according to its internal procedures.

The Chair of the Federal Appeals Panel shall be elected by the Panel from amongst those of its members chosen by the Federal Board. The Chair upon ceasing to be a member of the Panel shall also cease to be Chair of the Panel but if chosen again as a member of the Panel by the Federal Board and confirmed by Conference shall be eligible for re-election as the Chair.

22.2 Each member of the Panel shall hold office for five years, and shall be eligible for re-appointment provided that no person shall be entitled to hold office for more than ten years out of twelve in aggregate. No person shall be eligible for appointment if (and any member shall forthwith vacate office upon becoming) an MP (save that the Chief Whip may be a federal appointee) or a member of the Federal Board. The body making the original appointment may terminate the appointment because the appointee is no longer able to carry out their duties as a member of the Panel on account of ill health or for other good cause. Any casual vacancy on the Panel may be filled by the body making the original appointment for the residue of the term of that appointment.

22.3 The Panel shall adjudicate upon:

- a. any dispute over the interpretation of this Constitution;
- b. any claim that the rights under this Constitution of a member or of an organ of the Federal Party or of an Affiliated Organisation recognised by the Federal Party have been infringed;
- c. any dispute, except one as to policy jurisdiction, between the Federal Party and a State Party;
- d. any matter expressly so provided by this Constitution or by rules made thereunder;
- e. any appeal from a like body in a State Party relating to an issue under this Constitution, except that no adjudication under this Article shall take place until any appropriate appeals procedures established within a relevant State Party have been exhausted; and
- f. any dispute or issue which shall be referred to it by a State Appeals Panel for adjudication.

- 22.4 The members of the Panel to hear a particular case shall be selected by the Chair, or by a person authorised by the Chair to carry out this task, who shall if appropriate consult with the applicant, subject to the following provisos:
- a. any dispute between a State Party and the Federal Party or between State Parties shall be heard by the Chair of the Federal Appeals Panel, three State appointees (one of whom, other than the Chair, being from the State or each of the States concerned) and three Federal appointees;
  - b. at least three members shall be appointed to hear any other case (and an applicant may refuse to proceed unless at least three members are present), of whom at least one shall be an appointee of the State Party of which the applicant is a member;
  - c. the members hearing any dispute relating to the composition of the Approved Candidates list shall if practicable include a former parliamentary candidate;
  - d. the members shall not include any member of the Executive of a State Party in any case where the dispute is one in which the State Party is involved; and
  - e. no member who heard the case at first instance shall hear the appeal therefrom.
- 22.5 The Panel shall decide whether or not a dispute or matter for adjudication falls within the jurisdiction conferred on it by Article 22.
- 22.6 The Panel shall determine and publish its own procedures (provided that the same are not inconsistent with this Constitution and subject to confirmation by conference). The Panel shall publish once a year, at the time of the party's autumn conference, a report containing its procedures, all of its decisions on its interpretation of this Constitution since the previous report, a summary of each of its other rulings since the previous report and any other matters the Panel shall see fit to include.
- 22.7 Any decision of the Panel shall be final and binding upon all those concerned.

## **ARTICLE 23: Complaints Procedure**

- 23.1 If a complaint is brought against a member of the Party, it shall be dealt with by the State Party which covers the Local Party they are a member of or, for members outside Great Britain, by the State Party which the Federal Party has appointed under Article 3.2(c).
- 23.2 Provided it is done in compliance with the procedures made under Article 23.3, each State Party may choose either to administer all of its complaints through the complaints procedure or it may decide to delegate the administration of all of its complaints to the Federal Party.
- 23.3 The Federal Board shall have power, after appropriate consultations, to make and from time to time vary procedures for the handling of complaints (the "Complaints Procedures"). These Complaints Procedures shall include an appeals process. The Federal Board shall report any variations made to the Complaints Procedures in its written report to conference under Article 8.7. Such variations shall be effective from the date on which such report is made.

## **ARTICLE 24: Support for a government which contains other political parties**

- 24.1 This Article applies where the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons ('the Commons Party') enters into negotiations with one or more other political parties with a view to the formation of a government supported by the party and such party or parties; and sets out the procedures to be followed for the party to give its support for such an arrangement.
- 24.2 For this purpose:
- a. the Leader shall, with due regard to diversity, appoint a negotiating team to conduct such negotiations; and
  - b. there shall be a reference group consisting of not more than nine people (none of whom shall be members of the negotiating team) appointed equally by (i) the Federal Policy Committee (ii) the Federal Board and (iii) the Westminster Parliamentary Parties (in the last case acting jointly).
- 24.3 The negotiating team shall report regularly to the Leader and the reference group, and shall have regard to their respective views.
- 24.4 If as a result of these negotiations the Commons Party determines, after further consultation with (i) the Federal Policy Committee (ii) the Federal Board and (iii) the Parliamentary Party in the House of Lords (together 'the consultees'), to support a government which contains members of one or more other political parties, it shall seek the approval of conference by submitting a motion to that effect. Such a submission shall state the final views thereon of each of the consultees, and such a motion shall require for its passage a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the conference.
- 24.5 Upon the submission of such a motion, the Federal Conference Committee shall convene a conference to consider the motion at the earliest practicable opportunity or shall include the motion in the agenda of a conference currently in session or imminently to start.

**ANNEXE**

*Note: this annexe, referenced in Article 21.7(c), refers to a system that now no longer exists and therefore is not a list of current Affiliated Organisations.*

**1. Specified Associated Organisations**

- a) Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors and Campaigners (ALDC)
- b) Association of Liberal Democrat Engineers and Scientists (ALDES)
- c) Liberal Democrat Campaign for Racial Equality (LDCRE)
- d) LGBT+ Liberal Democrats
- e) Liberal Democrat Lawyers' Association (LDLA)
- f) Liberal Democrat Women
- g) Young Liberals
- h) Parliamentary Candidates' Association (PCA)
- i) Liberal Democrat Christian Forum (LDCF)

**2. Associated Organisations**

- a) Association of Liberal Democrat Trades Unionists
- b) Chinese Liberal Democrats
- c) Green Liberal Democrats
- d) Humanist & Secularist Liberal Democrats
- e) Liberal Democrat Action for Land Taxation & Economic Reform
- f) Liberal Democrat Campaign for Racial Equality
- g) Liberal Democrat Disability Association
- h) Liberal Democrat Education Association
- i) Liberal Democrat European Group
- j) Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel
- k) Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine
- l) Liberal Democrats for Electoral Reform
- m) Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary
- n) Liberal International British Group

## FEDERAL CONFERENCE STANDING ORDERS

### Glossary of terms

#### Business motion

A proposal to conduct the affairs of the Party in a particular way or to express an opinion on the way affairs have been conducted.

#### Business amendment

A proposal to change a business motion. *Any such proposal should be significant, should be within the scope of the original motion and must not be a direct negative.*

#### Committee

Throughout these standing orders, Committee means the Federal Conference Committee unless otherwise qualified.

#### Constitutional amendment

A proposal to change the constitution of the Party.

#### Secondary constitutional amendment

An amendment to a constitutional amendment. *This must not introduce new material.*

#### Consultative session

A meeting where selected areas of policy or strategy are considered in greater depth than is possible in full debates.

#### Day visitor

Someone who has paid the appropriate day visitor fee. Day visitors are not entitled to speak or vote in full sessions of conference.

#### Emergency motion

A proposal which derives from a significant recent development which occurred after the deadline for submission of motions. ***Emergency motions must be brief (maximum 500 words).***

#### Emergency amendment

An amendment to a motion which relates to a specific event which occurred after the deadline for the submission of amendments. ***It must be brief and uncontentious.***

#### Full session

Any part of the conference agenda during which debates, topical issue discussions or discussion of business, including formal reports, takes place. This specifically excludes formal speeches such as those by the Leader or Party Officers.

#### Point of order

A suggestion to the chair of a debate that the conduct of the debate, as laid down in the standing orders, has not been followed correctly.

### **Policy motion**

A proposal to adopt a new policy or reaffirm an existing one. This includes motions accompanying policy papers.

### **Policy amendment**

A proposal to change a policy motion. *Any proposal should be of significant importance, should be within the scope of the original motion and must not be a direct negative.*

### **Policy paper**

A paper prepared by the Federal Policy Committee and submitted to conference for debate under the terms of Article 7.4 of the Federal Party constitution.

### **Procedural motion**

A proposal that the conduct of a debate should be changed in a specific way. Procedural motions are:

#### **Move to next business**

A proposal that the conference should cease to consider an item of business and immediately move to the next item on the agenda.

#### **Reference back**

A proposal to refer a motion or amendment to a named body of the Party for further consideration.

#### **Request for a count**

A request to the chair that a specific vote be counted and recorded rather than decided on the chair's assessment of a show of voting cards.

#### **Separate vote**

A request to the chair of a debate that a part or parts of a motion or amendment should be voted on separately.

#### **Suspension of standing orders**

A proposal to relax specific standing orders for a stated purpose.

### **Special conference**

An additional meeting of the conference requisitioned by the Federal Board, Federal Policy Committee, conference itself or 2% of party members, in not fewer than 10% of local parties under the provisions of Article 6.3 of the Federal constitution.

### **Standing order amendment**

A proposal to change these standing orders.

### **Secondary standing order amendment**

An amendment to a standing order amendment. This must not introduce new material.

### **Topical issue discussion**

A discussion on a policy issue of significant and topical relevance, conducted without a vote.

### **Voting member**

A member attending Conference who has satisfied the requirements for attendance and has paid the registration fee presently in force for party members as agreed by FCC, and who is not a day visitor [or observer].

## Standing Orders for a conference held remotely

- a. In the event that the Federal Board determines it is impossible to hold a conference under the normal rules, and instead summons a special meeting of the conference to be held remotely, or the Committee otherwise directs that a conference shall be conducted remotely, these Standing Orders shall apply
- b. A remote conference shall be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders that apply to a conference not conducted remotely ('the original Standing Orders'), save that:
  - i. All references in the original Standing Orders to votes, whether by ballot, show of hands or show of voting cards, shall instead be conducted via an online poll or alternative secure method of online voting, designated by the Committee; similarly all references to speakers cards shall be taken to mean electronic speakers' cards.
  - ii. Any communications with the chair must be made via an online channel designated by the Committee for that purpose and advertised to voting members prior to the commencement of a debate.
  - iii. In original Standing Order 6.2, the reference to the Chief Steward shall also include lead moderators designated by the Chief Steward.
  - iv. Original Standing Order 8.7 shall apply save that the Committee may set a deadline in respect of any given full session for the receipt of electronic speakers' cards; the chair shall have discretion to accept electronic speakers' cards after the deadline.
  - v. Original Standing Orders 9.1, 9.2, 11.4 and Procedural motion 3 (Request for a Count) in the Glossary of Terms, shall not apply; instead, voting members shall, when appropriate, be directed by the chair to vote using the online voting tool made available to them. Standing Order 2.3 shall not apply.
  - vi. In original Standing Order 10.1, any voting member may signal to the Chair via the designated online channel, that they are moving a point of order, in lieu of rising in their place.
  - vii. As, by necessity, all votes shall be counted votes, Standing Order 11.4 shall not apply; instead the chair shall ensure the result of the counted vote is publicised to members, via the appropriate online channel.

## Standing Orders for the Federal Conference

### 1. The Conference Agenda

#### 1.1 What is on the agenda

The agenda for each meeting of conference, other than a special conference, shall include time for:

- a) One or more consultative sessions; save that the Committee may decide not to hold any consultative sessions at a spring conference;
- b) A business session or sessions for the consideration of reports from the Parliamentary Parties as listed in Article 6.5 of the Federal Party's Constitution, the Federal Board, the Federal Policy Committee, Federal Communications and Elections Committee, Federal International Relations Committee, Federal Council, and the Federal Conference Committee together with, when appropriate, reports from any other body the Committee considers appropriate, accounts, the annual report, a motion accompanying the proposed strategy of the party, business motions, constitutional amendments and standing order amendments;
- c) Policy motions (including motions accompanying policy papers);
- d) Emergency motions;
- e) Topical issue discussions;
- f) Any other business which the Committee thinks appropriate.

The time to be allocated to each type of business and the order of that business shall be decided by the Committee provided that conference may decide not to take any particular item on the agenda.

#### 1.2 Conference or council of state parties

In addition, time before or after any meeting may be agreed with the relevant state party for a meeting of the conference or council of that party.

#### 1.3 Right to submit agenda items

- a) Reports to Conference may be submitted only by the bodies listed in paragraph 1.1(b).
- b) Business motions (including amendments and emergency business motions and amendments), constitutional amendments and secondary constitutional amendments, standing order amendments and secondary standing order amendments may be submitted by the Federal Board, Federal Policy Committee, Federal Council, Federal Conference Committee, state parties, regional parties in England, local parties, Affiliated Organisations and 10 party members.
- c) Motions accompanying policy papers may only be submitted by the Federal Policy Committee.
- d) Policy motions (including amendments, emergency policy motions and amendments) may be submitted by the Federal Policy Committee, state

parties, regional parties in England, local parties, Affiliated Organisations and 10 party members.

- e) The Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons may submit a motion relating to supporting a government containing members of the other parties, in accordance with Article 24 of the constitution.
- f) Proposals for topical issue discussions may be submitted by any party member.

#### **1.4 How motions and amendments are submitted**

All motions and amendments must be submitted to the Committee. They must identify a person authorised to agree to their being composited or redrafted. The details of methods of submission will be notified for each conference via the Party website.

#### **1.5 The deadlines by which motions, amendments, reports and questions to reports must be submitted**

The Committee shall specify:

- a) The closing date for the receipt of policy motions (including motions accompanying policy papers), business motions, constitutional amendments and amendments to standing orders, which shall be at least eight weeks before the start of conference.
- b) The closing date for the receipt of amendments to motions published in the Agenda and emergency motions, which shall be at least two days before the start of conference.
- c) The closing date for the submission of written reports from the bodies listed in paragraph 1.1(b), which will be set so as to enable their distribution with the Agenda. Any supplementary report submitted later than this deadline may only be tabled at conference with the permission of the Committee.
- d) The closing date for the submission of questions to any of the reports listed in the Agenda, which shall be the same as the deadline for emergency motions. Questions submitted by this deadline are guaranteed to be asked.
- e) Notwithstanding 1.5(d), questions may always be submitted to any of the reports listed in the Agenda, by the end of the preceding morning (for report sessions taking place in the afternoon) or afternoon (for report sessions taking place in the morning). Any questions submitted by this deadline will only be taken at the discretion of the chair.
- f) The closing date for proposals for topical issue discussions, which shall be at least two days before the start of conference

#### **1.6 Notification of deadlines**

All dates specified under Standing Order 1.5 shall be publicised to party members and bodies entitled to submit motions. Publication in the party newspaper/magazine and website may be treated as notice for this purpose.

### **1.7 Later deadlines in special circumstances**

In special circumstances the Committee may specify later dates than those indicated above. In particular, where developments which, in the opinion of the Committee, are of great importance have taken place after the closing date for emergency motions and questions to reports, the Committee may make time available for an additional emergency motion or for a statement to be made on behalf of the Party or for additional questions to be submitted to reports.

## **2. Consultative Sessions**

### **2.1 The subjects for consultative sessions**

The subjects for debate at consultative sessions shall be chosen by the Committee on the advice of the Federal Policy Committee and, where appropriate, the Federal Board, and published in the Agenda. Two or more such sessions may be held simultaneously.

### **2.2 Speaking at consultative sessions**

Any member of the Party may be called to speak at a consultative session and, with the approval of the chair, non-members with relevant expertise may also be called.

### **2.3 Voting at consultative sessions**

At the discretion of the chair a vote by show of hands may be taken to indicate the weight of opinion among members present on any issue that has been debated.

## **3. The Agenda**

### **3.1 The shortlisting of motions**

The Committee shall draw up the Agenda and shall decide which of the motions duly submitted shall be included in it. The Committee may allocate time for one or more policy or business motions to be selected by ballot. Copies of motions not selected shall be available for inspection and will be supplied to any party member on payment of a copying charge and postage.

### **3.2 Motions for the amendment of the constitution or standing orders**

Save as detailed below in Standing Order 4.3, all proposed amendments to the constitution or standing orders must be selected for debate.

### **3.3 Balance between State and Federal policy debates**

The Committee shall, in drawing up the Agenda, have due regard to the balance of State and Federal policy debates and in particular shall as far as possible organise the agenda so that all matters which relate solely to one or more state parties but not all State Parties or the Federal Party shall be considered at either the beginning or the end of the conference.

#### **4. Selection of Motions and Amendments**

##### **4.1 Compositing or otherwise altering motions**

In drawing up the Agenda the Committee shall seek to reflect the range of views in the Party as indicated by the motions and amendments submitted. The Committee may:

- a) Treat any severable part of a motion or amendment as a separate motion or amendment.
- b) Redraft a motion or amendment so as to improve expression, remove inaccuracy or superfluity or take account of new developments.
- c) Composite similar motions or amendments.

##### **4.2 Selection of amendments**

The Committee shall decide which of the amendments duly submitted to each motion shall be selected. No amendment shall be selected if, in the opinion of the Committee it is insubstantial, outside the scope of the motion, or tantamount to a direct negative of the motion.

##### **4.3 Motions for the amendment of the constitution or standing orders**

The Committee may refuse to select a motion for amendment of the constitution or standing orders if, in their opinion, it is:

- a) Similar in effect to another motion which has been selected for debate or ballot at the same meeting of conference.
- b) Similar in effect to a motion that has been rejected at either of the last two meetings of conference.
- c) In the case of amendments to the constitution, incomplete in that it leaves unamended some other part of the constitution which contradicts the meaning of the amendment.
- d) In the case of amendments to standing orders, incomplete in that it leaves unamended some other part of standing orders which contradicts the meaning of the amendment.
- e) Ambiguous.

##### **4.4 Emergency motions**

The Committee may reject an emergency motion if:

- a) It is similar in effect to another motion that has been selected for debate or ballot.
- b) It is similar in effect to a subject chosen for a topical issue discussion.
- c) It is unclear as to its meaning or intent or is, in the opinion of the Committee, too poorly drafted to provide a sensible basis for debate.
- d) It falls outside the definition of emergency motions.

No amendment shall be taken to any motion selected under this Standing Order.

### **4.5 Ballots for emergency motions**

All emergency motions, except those rejected under Standing Order 4.4, must be placed either on the agenda for debate or in a ballot for selection by Conference. The Committee may hold separate ballots to select which of a range of emergency policy motions and which of a range of emergency business motions to debate. If one or more ballots is held the Committee shall circulate the text of all balloted motions to the voting members as soon as practicable and shall specify a closing time for the ballot. Following the counting of any ballots the Committee shall decide how many motions shall be debated in the time available.

### **4.6 Emergency amendments**

The Committee shall have complete discretion whether to select emergency amendments for debate.

### **4.7 Topical issue discussions**

The choice of subjects for topical issue discussions shall be made by the Officers of the Committee in consultation with the Officers of the Federal Policy Committee. In choosing the subjects, the Officers shall have regard to the significance and topicality of the subjects proposed and whether they are likely to provoke a lively discussion.

## **5. Special Meetings**

### **5.1 Timetabling of special meetings**

The Committee shall, as soon as practicable after the requisitioning of a special meeting of the conference, fix a date for the meeting, draw up the Agenda and, if appropriate, specify a date for the submission of amendments. The meeting shall deal only with the business stated in the notice of requisition save that the Committee may allow time for emergency motions and for business which is formal or, in its opinion, uncontentious.

### **5.2 Preferred timescales for special meetings**

In setting dates for the submission of motions and amendments and giving notice thereof and of the conference itself the Committee shall endeavour to follow the timescales laid down elsewhere in these standing orders but, where this is not practicable, the Committee shall set such dates as it sees fit.

## **6. Appeals**

### **6.1 Appeals against rejection of motions**

The Committee shall provide written reasoning to the nominee of the proposers for the rejection of any motion or amendment. The proposers may appeal, in writing, to the next meeting of the Committee. Any such appeal shall provide reasons why, in the opinion of the proposers, the expressed reasons for rejection are not valid. If the appeal is allowed, the motion or amendment shall be treated as an emergency motion or amendment according to the stage of the agenda-setting process at which the appeal has been allowed.

## **6.2 Appeals against exclusion from conference**

Any person excluded from conference by a decision of the Chief Steward shall have the right of appeal to the Committee at the next of its regular meetings. The exclusion shall remain in force pending the appeal.

## **7. The Chair**

### **7.1 Who chairs conference**

The President, if present, shall normally take the chair at the formal opening and closing of Conference and when the Party Leader is making a formal speech from the platform. At all other sessions the chair shall be appointed by the Committee. Normally no person shall chair more than one session at any meeting.

### **7.2 The Chair's aide**

The Committee may appoint an aide or aides to assist the chair of each session.

## **8. Conduct of Debate**

### **8.1 Variation in the order of business**

The Committee may propose to the conference a variation in the order of business as set out in the Agenda. Such variation shall be put to the vote and shall take effect if approved by a majority of those voting.

### **8.2 Withdrawal of motions and amendments**

Once the Committee has included a motion or amendment, or part of a motion or amendment, in the Agenda, may not be withdrawn except by leave of conference. A request to withdraw a motion may be submitted to conference either by the movers of the motion or the Committee.

### **8.3 The order of debate**

The Committee shall direct the order of debate. Generally, however, a motion will be moved and immediately thereafter the amendments and options will be moved in the order directed by the Committee. There will then be a general debate. The movers of amendments and options (or their nominees) shall have the right of reply in the same order (except that where an amendment or option has not been opposed during the debate, the chair of the session shall have the right to direct that its movers shall not exercise their right of reply), after which the mover of the motion (or the mover's nominee) shall have the right of reply. Votes shall then be taken on the amendments and options in the order in which they have been moved and, finally, on the substantive motion. The Committee may direct that part of any motion or amendment or groups or amendments may be the subject of a separate debate.

### **8.4 Topical issue discussions**

The Committee shall direct the order of the discussion. Normally the proposer of the subject shall speak first, and a representative of the Federal Policy Committee shall speak last.

### **8.5 Who may speak**

All voting members may speak at a full session of conference. Additionally, the Committee may invite any person to address the conference as a guest. Neither such provision shall prejudice the right of the chair of a session to select speakers.

### **8.6 The special rights of the Federal Committees**

Provided that the Federal Policy Committee is not proposing the motion or any of the amendments to be taken in a debate on a policy motion or on motions relating to the policy-making processes of the Party it shall have the right to nominate a person to report its views on the subject before the conference. The Federal Board shall have similar rights on business motions or motions to amend the constitution, as shall the Federal Conference Committee on motions relating to the proceeding and procedures of the conference and to amend standing orders. Such a person shall be called to speak for the same length of time as the person replying on behalf of the mover of the motion.

### **8.7 The selection of speakers**

Voting members wishing to speak in any debate shall submit a speaker's card, prior to the commencement of the debate in which they wish to speak, stating whether they wish to speak for or against an amendment, the motion or part of the motion. The chair shall be responsible for the choice of the speakers and shall attempt to provide a balanced debate between the different viewpoints in the conference, but may announce a departure from this rule if there is an overwhelming preponderance of members wishing to speak on the same side. The chair shall have the discretion to accept speakers' cards after the start of the debate. Save as provided for in these standing orders, no person may speak more than once in any debate.

### **8.8 The length of speeches**

The Committee shall set out in the Agenda time limits for speeches.

## **9. Voting at Conference**

### **9.1 The method of voting**

Voting cards shall be issued at each meeting to voting members. (The Committee may direct that voting on any issue be by ballot.) Subject thereto all votes at full sessions shall be taken by show of voting cards and by voting members voting securely online

### **9.2 Counting of votes**

A vote by show of voting cards shall be counted:

- a) If the Committee has so directed.
- b) If the Chair so directs.
- c) As the result of a procedural motion under Standing Order 11.5 below.

A recount will only be held if the chair is not satisfied that the first count was accurate.

### **9.3 Separate votes**

A separate vote may be taken on a part of a motion or amendment:

- a) On the direction of the Committee.
- b) At the discretion of the chair.
- c) As a result of a procedural motion under Standing Order 11.4 below.

## **10. Points of Order**

### **10.1 Making a point of order**

Any voting member may rise on a point of order which shall be taken immediately except that, during a vote, no point of order shall be taken that does not refer to the conduct of the vote. The chair's decision on all points of order shall be final.

## **11. Procedural Motions**

### **11.1 Next business**

- a) A voting member may, during any full conference session, submit, in writing, a request that conference move to next business, giving the reasons to do so. The submission shall not exceed 75 words.
- b) The chair may either take the request immediately upon receipt, or at the end of any speech currently being made. If more than one request is received the chair shall decide which to take. No more than one request may be taken in respect to any motion or report.
- c) When the request is to be taken, the chair shall read the statement of reasons and ask Conference whether it wishes to consider the request to move to next business. If Conference decides, by a simple majority of those voting, to do so, the person who made the request may speak. The Chair may allow other speakers. All speeches under this standing order shall be limited to two minutes. If Conference decides not to debate the proposal, it falls.
- d) The proposal shall require a two-thirds majority of those voting to be passed. If it is carried the current agenda item shall be abandoned without any further debate or vote and, at the discretion of the chair, either the next agenda item shall be taken or there shall be an adjournment until the time at which the next agenda item was due to be taken.

### 11.2 Reference back

- a) A request to refer back a motion under debate may be submitted by any of the bodies or groups listed in Standing Order 1.3(b) for business motions and 1.3(d) for policy motions. The deadline for submission of such a request shall be the same as that for amendments to motions. In exceptional circumstances, the chair of the debate shall have discretion to accept a request for a reference back if it is received in writing after this deadline.
- b) The submission shall state to whom the motion is to be referred and shall include a statement of the reasons, including reasons why voting against the motion would not achieve a similar result, not exceeding 150 words.
- c) If more than one request is received with respect to a motion, the Committee (or the chair of the debate in the case of requests received after the deadline) shall decide which to take. No more than one request may be taken with respect to any motion.
- d) When the request is to be taken, the Chair shall read the statement of reasons and ask Conference whether it wishes to consider the request to refer. If Conference decides, by a simple majority of those voting, to do so, the person who made the request may speak and the mover of the substantive motion, or their nominee, may reply. The Chair may allow other speakers. All speeches under this standing order shall be limited to three minutes. If Conference decides not to debate the reference back, it falls.
- e) The reference back shall require a simple majority of those voting to be passed. If it is carried the current agenda item shall be abandoned without any further debate or vote and, at the discretion of the chair, either the next agenda item shall be taken or there shall be an adjournment until the time at which the next agenda item was due to be taken.
- f) If the substantive motion is referred to the Federal Board, the Federal Policy Committee or the Federal Conference Committee that body shall, in its report to the next meeting of the conference, state what action it has taken on the reference.

### 11.3 Separate vote

A voting member of conference may request that the chair take a separate vote on a part of a motion or amendment provided that such a request is in writing and received by the commencement of the first conference session on the day before the debate is scheduled. If the debate is scheduled for the first day of conference, the request must be received in writing no later than 48 hours before the opening of conference. The Committee shall have complete discretion whether to take a separate vote. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the debate shall have discretion to accept a request for a separate vote if it is received in writing after this deadline.

**11.4 Counted vote**

Any voting member may ask for a counted vote, which shall be taken if the request is supported by 50 members rising in their places and showing their voting cards.

**11.5 Suspension of standing orders**

- a) A voting conference member may, during any full conference session, move a motion for the suspension of standing orders. Such a motion may contain no more than one proposed change to the agenda or conduct of debate. The mover shall submit the motion together with a written statement of its purpose, not exceeding 75 words, to the chair, who shall read them to the meeting. The chair may either take the request immediately upon receipt, or at the end of the speech currently being made.
- b) No motion to suspend standing orders may suspend any requirement of the constitution, nor any part of these standing orders which govern:
  - i) The rights of, or timetable for, submission of motions and amendments.
  - ii) Consultative sessions.
  - iii) Procedural motions for next business or suspension of standing orders.
- c) No motion to suspend standing orders to introduce a motion or amendment on to the agenda can be taken unless the motion or amendment has been submitted to the Committee in accordance with the published timetable and, where a right of appeal against non-selection exists, the right has been exercised.
- d) The chair shall read the statement of purpose and, if the suspension is allowable in the terms of this standing order, ask the conference whether it wishes to debate the request for suspension. If the conference decides not to debate the request, it falls. If the conference decides, by a majority of those present and voting, to hear the request the mover may speak and a representative of the Committee may reply. The chair shall have the discretion to allow other speakers. All speeches on the motion to suspend standing orders will be limited to two minutes.
- e) A motion to suspend standing orders shall only be carried if supported by at least two-thirds of the conference members voting. If the procedural motion is carried all standing orders shall remain in force except only for the purposes set out in the motion.

**11.6 No procedural motions during votes**

No procedural motion can be moved during a vote.

## **12. Reports**

### **12.1 Which reports are tabled**

The business session or sessions of the conference must include consideration of reports from the bodies listed in Standing Order 1.1(b).

### **12.2 Submission and selection of questions**

A voting member may submit questions to any report tabled for consideration, by the deadlines set under Standing Orders 1.5(d) and (e). The Committee shall publish in advance of the report session all the questions submitted under Standing Order 1.5(d) which are in order, compositing similar questions where appropriate. Questions to the Federal Board report may include questions about the work of the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the work of the Federal People Development Committee

### **12.3 Whether questions are in order or not**

A question shall be ruled out of order if it asks the body submitting the report about issues which are outside its duties and responsibilities. If the question could be answered by another body reporting to the same conference, the Committee may transfer the question to that body.

### **12.4 How questions and supplementary questions are put and answered**

After the report is moved, the mover, or their nominee, shall answer the questions in turn. After each question has been answered, the voting member who submitted the question will be given the opportunity to put a supplementary question, speaking for a maximum of one minute, and the mover, or their nominee, will be given an opportunity to respond. The chair shall determine the time given to the mover in moving the report and replying to questions. The chair shall also determine how many of the published questions, and how many of the questions submitted under Standing Order 1.5 (e), can be taken. After the conference the Committee shall publish the answers to all questions submitted under Standing Orders 1.5(d) and (e) which are in order, and to all supplementary questions asked.

### **12.5 Approval, rejection or reference back of reports from Federal Party committees or sub-committees**

- a) Any report tabled by a Federal Party committee or sub-committee must be submitted for approval by the conference and must be voted upon accordingly.
- b) A voting member may move the rejection of any part of the report or the report as a whole, by submitting a speaker's card prior to the commencement of the consideration of the report, stating the section(s) which they wish to have rejected. All moves to reject a report must be debated (except that the chair shall have discretion to choose between moves to reject the same part of the report), at the conclusion of the question session. The person who made the request shall speak and the

mover of the report, or their nominee, shall reply. The chair may allow other speakers, and shall determine the time given to all speakers.

- c) A request to refer back any part of the report or the report as a whole may be submitted by any of the bodies or groups listed in Standing Order 1.3(b). The deadline for submission of such a request shall be the same as that for amendments to motions. In exceptional circumstances, the chair of the debate shall have discretion to accept a request for a reference back if it is received in writing after this deadline. A proposal to refer back shall include a written statement of the reasons, not exceeding 150 words, including reasons why rejecting the report would not achieve a similar result, together with any recommendations to the committee or sub-committee tabling the report. The Committee or, in the case of late submissions, the chair, shall decide how many references back to take if more than one is submitted. The representative of the body or group that submitted the request shall speak and the mover of the report, or their nominee, shall reply. The chair may allow other speakers, and shall determine the time given to all speakers.

## **12.6 Receipt of reports from other bodies**

- a) Any report tabled by a body other than a Federal Party committee or sub-committee must be submitted for receipt by the conference and must be voted upon accordingly.
- b) A voting member may move not to receive any part of the report or the report as a whole, by submitting a speaker's card prior to the commencement of the consideration of the report, stating the section(s) which they wish not to receive. All moves not to receive a report must be debated (except that the chair shall have discretion to choose between moves not to receive the same part of the report), at the conclusion of the question session. The person who made the request shall speak and the mover of the report, or their nominee, shall reply. The chair may allow other speakers, and shall determine the time given to all speakers.
- c) A request to refer back any part of the report or the report as a whole may be submitted by any of the bodies or groups listed in Standing Order 1.3(b). The deadline for submission of such a request shall be the same as that for amendments to motions. In exceptional circumstances, the chair of the debate shall have discretion to accept a request for a reference back if it is received in writing after this deadline. A proposal to refer back shall include a written statement of the reasons, not exceeding 150 words, including reasons why not receiving the report would not achieve a similar result, together with any recommendations to the body tabling the report. The Committee or, in the case of late submissions, the chair, shall decide how many references back to take if more than one is submitted. The representative of the body or group that submitted the request shall speak and the mover of the report, or their nominee, shall reply. The chair may allow other speakers, and shall determine the time given to all speakers.

**13. Amendment of Standing Orders**

**13.1 Amendment of standing orders**

These standing orders may be amended by a two-thirds majority of members of conference voting on a motion duly submitted and selected in accordance with standing orders. Subject to any amendment they shall remain in force from meeting to meeting.

**14. The Chair and Vice Chairs of the Committee**

**14.1 Chair and Vice Chairs**

At its first meeting after a new election the Committee shall elect a Chair, who must be a member of the Committee directly elected by party members, and at least one Vice Chair, who must be members of the Committee either directly elected by party members or elected by one of the State Parties.

## **ELECTION REGULATIONS**

### **Common provisions for all elections**

1. These regulations set out procedures for the election by all members of the federal party of the Leader, President, Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, federal committee and Federal Council posts which are filled by ballots of all party members; and where a decision has been taken to use them for other elections. References in these regulations to “federal committee(s)” shall also be taken to include the Federal Council. Paragraphs 2-25 apply to all such elections; subsequent sections apply as identified to specific individual elections.

### **Organisation of elections**

2. The Federal Board shall appoint a Returning Officer to oversee all party elections conducted under these election regulations for a period of three years, or until their resignation, incapacity or death if any of these occur sooner. The Returning Officer shall be responsible for the efficient and timely conduct of these elections. The appointment shall be made at least three months before the Returning Officer’s term of office begins.
3. The Chief Executive shall be the Deputy Returning Officer. The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer may jointly appoint Deputy Acting Returning Officers from party members or staff with relevant experience.
4. The Returning Officer may delegate any of the responsibilities set out in these regulations to the Deputy Returning Officer or any Deputy Acting Returning Officer. In any cases of dispute within the Returning Officer team, the decision of the Returning Officer shall be final.
5. The Returning Officer shall ensure that comprehensive written guides and procedures for the use of the Returning Officer team, candidates and voters, are in place for each election at least one month before the opening of nominations in an election. These shall not, thereafter, be amended without good cause.

### **Timetables**

6. The Federal Board shall agree and publicise a timetable for each election, including the publication of the notice of elections, the deadlines to be used for the opening and closing of nominations, submission of candidates’ manifestos, despatch and return of ballot papers, and the date for the counting of votes. Once publicised, these shall not, thereafter, be amended without good cause.

- a. For elections for the Leader, the Federal Board shall agree and publicise the timetable as soon as possible after the vacancy or impending vacancy is announced; and
  - b. For all other elections conducted under these regulations, the Federal Board shall where practicable agree and publicise the timetable no later than the spring conference before the elections are due.
7. Once the timetable for any election has been announced but before the opening of nominations, the Federal Board may postpone the election if the timetable conflicts with a general election or a referendum covering England Scotland Wales or any combination thereof, or any other significant event that in the Board's view would unduly hinder the conduct of the election.
8. After the opening of nominations for any election, the Returning Officer may postpone or suspend the election if it would conflict with a general election or a referendum covering England Scotland Wales or any combination thereof, or any other significant event, that in the Returning Officer's view would unduly hinder the conduct of the election. If any votes have been cast, the Returning Officer has the power to cancel them and restart the election as soon as the Returning Officer considers practicable.

### **Conduct of elections**

9. The electorate for the purpose of these elections shall be those members with paid-up membership of the Liberal Democrats on the closing date for nominations. Members who, at the closing date for nominations, are in the grace period following their membership subscription due date can be added to the electorate if they renew their membership at least three days prior to the close of voting.
10. All elections will be conducted electronically; this includes the submission of nominations, display of candidates' manifestos and casting of votes. The online voting system shall prompt voters to look at candidates' manifestos prior to voting and provide for the randomisation of the names on the ballot paper.
11. The Returning Officer shall make provision for voters who cannot vote electronically to vote by post upon a request in writing. Any such request shall only be valid for the specific election(s) being conducted at the time of the request.
12. Any official party publication whether in paper or electronic form shall give, as far as possible, equal coverage and a fair balance to all candidates. Coverage of activity by any candidate that is not related to the election may continue in a normal way.

13. Federal Party employees shall maintain strict neutrality from the opening date for declaration of candidacy. It is recommended that employees of state parties, Affiliated Organisations and any other relevant employing bodies shall also maintain such neutrality.
14. Party Officers, acting in their capacity as officers at federal, state, regional and local level, are expected, as far as possible, to give equal opportunities and fair balance to all candidates.

### **Manifestos and publicity material**

15. Each candidate shall be entitled to a personal manifesto to be displayed electronically, in a format to be determined by the Returning Officer. Each candidate shall be responsible for verifying, to the satisfaction of the Returning Officer, any statement in their manifesto claiming that they are endorsed by any individual or organisation. Such material must accompany the candidate's manifesto.
16. In addition to candidates' manifestos, the Returning Officer may decide to require each candidate to provide answers to common questions about their suitability for the position(s) for which they are standing. The Returning Officer shall draw up these questions in consultation with relevant party staff, party officers or officers of federal committees.
17. No candidate or persons acting on behalf of a candidate will use their own material or access to publicity to disparage any members of staff. All candidates and members acting on their behalf are governed by the Code of Conduct for Members and Registered Supporters and shall in particular follow its provisions when making any reference by name or implication to other candidates.

### **Counting of elections**

18. All contested elections shall be conducted by secret ballot and the single transferable vote. Counts shall be conducted in accordance with the current edition of the Electoral Reform Society's publication *How to Conduct an Election by the Single Transferable Vote*, subject to the application of paragraph 53 below for federal committee elections. On completion of the count, the election result will be published on the Party website giving details of all stages of the count.
19. The Returning Officer shall have the power to make rulings to facilitate the completion of the count.

### **Interpretation, complaints and appeals**

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20. In interpreting and applying these regulations, and in any case where the regulations are silent, the Returning Officer shall have the power to make all necessary decisions concerning the conduct of these elections, following the aims and principles of public election law.
21. The Returning Officer shall have the power to disqualify before declaration of the result, or unseat if declared elected any candidate who:
  - a. has brought the party into disrepute during the campaign or where the Returning Officer has clear evidence of this happening in the near future; or
  - b. is found to be in breach of any of these regulations,but shall not exercise such power without first offering any such candidate the right to make representation, and having regard thereto.
22. Any party member may lodge, in writing in a format prescribed by the Returning Officer, a formal complaint of infringement of election regulations upon becoming aware of any alleged infringement and not more than 7 days after the declaration. The written complaint should be addressed to the Returning Officer and specify in detail the nature of the infringement. The Returning Officer shall then decide, in full consultation with the Returning Officer team, whether there is sufficient evidence and grounds to uphold the complaint, but shall not do so without offering any candidate concerned the right to make representations, and having regard thereto. Any party member who makes repeated and vexatious complaints may be referred to the party's disciplinary system.
23. If a complaint is made prior to the declaration of the result, the Returning Officer shall have the power to postpone such declaration until the determination of such complaint or, where an appeal is made against their decision, until the determination of such appeal. The Returning Officer shall have the discretion to use this power to suspend individual candidates from serving on any position they are elected to while any such complaint is investigated and/or subject to appeal.
24. Appeals against decisions of the Returning Officer must be referred to the Federal Appeals Panel within 14 days of the decision.

### **Review**

25. The relevant sections of these regulations will be reviewed by the Federal Board based on a report from the Returning Officer no later than six months after the completion of any election. The report must include a report on any diversity measures taken as a result of any requirement under the federal constitution, potential data protection breaches and any changes or

clarifications required by rulings made by the Returning Officer or the Federal Appeals Panel.

### **Common provisions for leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections**

26. The provisions set out in paragraphs 27–42 are common to the elections for the Leader, President and Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, except where otherwise specified.

### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: timetables**

27. The timetable for the election shall be no shorter than 7 weeks and no longer than 13 weeks.

### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: nominations**

28. A candidate for office of Leader of the Liberal Democrats must be a Member of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, and must be nominated by not less than 10 percent of other members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, not including the candidate themselves, supported by not less than 200 party members in aggregate in not less than 20 Local Parties.
29. A candidate for the office of President must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by not less than 200 party members in not less than 20 Local Parties.
30. A candidate for the office of Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by any Local Party, any Regional Party, any State Party, any Affiliated Organisation, or any 20 party members.
31. Local parties include, for the purposes of paragraphs 28–30, the Affiliated Organisation or Organisations representing youth and/or students.
32. Nominations must be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate.
33. A nominator may not nominate more than one candidate for any one position.
34. After acquiring the necessary nominations for candidacy, each candidate may nominate an agent for their campaign. A candidate who fails to nominate an agent will be deemed their own agent.

### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: manifestos and publicity material**

35. All publicity material produced in paper or electronic form for or on behalf of a candidate shall bear their agent's imprint, including a full postal address.

36. Any email messages sent out for or on behalf of a candidate for the purposes of publicising their candidacy shall also include a standard form of words provided by the Returning Officer specifying how the recipient of the message may opt out of future messages.

### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: conduct of election**

37. The sections of the membership register containing the names, addresses and telephone numbers of members will be released in electronic version to each candidate subject to the candidate signing a data protection statement agreeing to abide by the party's data protection policies and providing evidence to the Returning Officer's satisfaction that they are able to ensure compliance with them. Any candidate or supporter of a candidate facilitating a breach of this clause will be deemed to be in breach of the party's data protection policies. Candidates should also have due regard to their own data protection responsibilities when collecting and using any data of their own in the election.
38. The Returning Officer shall coordinate arrangements for official party member hustings events with a view to balancing the competing demands for media coverage of the campaign, parliamentary and other duties and the desirability of party members to have a chance to attend or watch a hustings. Any of the official hustings may take place partly or wholly online. Other party bodies may only hold hustings-type events if they invite all candidates to attend, but they do not require the agreement of all candidates to attend or send a representative in order to proceed. Events designated as official hustings by the Returning Officer shall take precedence over any other arrangements a candidate may have made.
39. Official party communications channels may only be used to promote hustings designated as official hustings by the Returning Officer. Responsibility for organising and paying for any hustings event shall lie with the hosting organisation, but the Returning Officer will publicise in good time official hustings events via the party's website, social media channels and email communications.
40. Treating is not allowed but the reasonable provision of food and drink to campaign helpers or event attendees is permissible.

### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: expenses**

41. For the elections for the Leader, President and Vice President of the Liberal Democrats:
- a. The Federal Board shall set a spending limit for election expenses, not including travel or subsistence, for each candidate, when they set the timetable for the election. No candidate, or their agent, shall exceed

this limit in the production of publicity material and all other expenditures connected with the campaign. This shall include any expenditure (or the relevant proportion of any expenditure) incurred before an individual becomes a candidate if the property, services or facilities are used for the purposes of the candidate's election. All donations above £500 must comply with the provisions of Schedule 7 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

- b. Each candidate and their agent shall complete and lodge with the Returning Officer an election expenses return form. The form must have attached receipts or invoices for all expenditure and must be lodged with the Returning Officer by midday on the 35th day after the declaration of the election result. The Returning Officer will hold the expenses returns of each candidate on file and these may be examined by any party member. The expenses form shall also contain the necessary information to prove compliance with schedule 7 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
- c. Any candidate who needs to make a report to the Electoral Commission shall do so in consultation with the Party's Compliance Department in order to ensure they meet the statutory deadlines.

#### **Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: election count**

42. The election count may be scrutinised by the candidate, their agents and one other personal representative and shall be open to any party member, subject to the capacity of the venue and at least 48 hours notification to the Returning Officer.

#### **Common provisions for Committee Elections**

43. The provisions set out in paragraphs 44–53 shall apply to elections which are to be conducted under these election regulations for federal committee and Federal Council posts which are filled by ballots of all party members or where a decision has been taken to use them for other elections.

#### **Committee elections: nominations**

44. A candidate for membership of a federal committee must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by any Local Party, any Regional Party, any State Party, any Affiliated Organisation (including the Affiliated Organisation or Organisations representing youth and/or students) or any 20 party members.
45. Nominations must be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. In order to be covered by one of the minimum representation requirements under Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution, a candidate must submit information with their nomination paper as to which of the protected characteristics apply to themselves. Candidates will be informed on the

nomination form that, when the election results are published, it may be possible for someone to infer some information regarding the fact that a candidate made such a submission.

### **Committee elections: manifestos**

46. In addition to candidates' personal manifestos and answers to any questions (see paragraphs 15–17), the Returning Officer shall ensure that a committee meeting attendance list, in a common format, is published. The list shall also include a report of the consecutive number of years each candidate has served on that committee, regardless of the route by which they have become a member of the committee.
47. The Returning Officer shall ensure that candidates' manifestos and answers to questions, and the committee attendance lists, shall be available to view online at least seven days before voting opens.

### **Committee elections: conduct of election**

48. No candidate may incur, or directly or indirectly authorise or cause to be incurred any expenses on campaigning at any time before or after the close of nominations. Candidates must not carry out any activities during the election period which may be viewed as treating.
49. The names and addresses of party members are confidential and shall not be released for the purposes of the election. Any candidate or supporter of a candidate facilitating a breach of this clause will be deemed to be in breach of the party's data protection policy. Candidates should have due regard to their data protection responsibilities when collecting and using any data of their own in the election.
50. No official party publication whether in paper or electronic form may accept advertisements in support of or in opposition to candidates.

### **Committee elections: counting**

51. The committees shall be counted in the order they are listed in the constitution. Once a candidate has been elected to a committee, if Article 8.3 of the constitution concerning candidates being elected for more than one committee applies, they will be withdrawn from all subsequent elections for which they were nominated.
52. If the specified proportions of candidates with protected characteristics in Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution are not elected by the operation of the above rules, the Returning Officer shall conduct such further counts as they consider necessary and declare elected those members of the under-represented characteristics and declare not elected those members of

the over-represented characteristics who would or would not have been elected to committees with such larger and smaller numbers of members as would cause the correct number of that characteristic to be elected.

53. Casual vacancies occurring shall be filled by recounting the original ballot papers in the election, passing over any preferences for any candidate causing a vacancy. If necessary, further counts shall be conducted using the principles set out in paragraph 52 to ensure that all candidates originally elected so remain and that the specified 24 proportions of protected characteristics are maintained. On completion of the count, the election result will be published on the Party website giving details of all stages of the count.

**Committee elections: principal councillor representatives on Federal Board and Federal Policy Committee**

54. The regulations set out in paragraphs 2–25 and 44–53 shall apply to elections for the principal councillor representatives on the Federal Board and the Federal Policy Committee, with the following exceptions:
- a. The electorate is members of the Liberal Democrats who are also councillors on principal local authorities, directly elected Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners; and
  - b. Candidates for any such position must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and a councillor on a principal local authority, directly elected Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner, and must be nominated by any other two principal councillors, directly elected Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners with valid membership of the party.

**Other elections: Liberal Democrat members of the Council of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)**

55. Following the resolution of the Federal Conference, the regulations set out in paragraphs 2–25 and 45–53 shall apply to elections for the Liberal Democrat members of the Council of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) with the following exceptions:
- a. The requirements for the elections of the minimum proportions of candidates with protected characteristics in Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution are replaced by the requirement that those elected shall include a minimum of one person from each state party and one person under the age of 26 at the time of the election.

**Ratified by Conference March 2025**

## **RULES RATIFIED BY CONFERENCE**

The following rules have been ratified by Federal Conference under Article 9.9 and are not otherwise included in this document:

- [Code of Conduct for Members and Registered Supporters \(ratified Spring 2023\)](#)
- [Rules for Affiliated Organisations \(ratified Autumn 2021\)](#)
- [Financial Compliance Escalation Policy \(ratified Spring 2021\)](#)
- [Data Protection Rules \(ratified Spring 2018\)](#)

This list is provided for information and in the case of any doubt about whether an item has been wrongly included or excluded from the list, the votes taken at Federal Conference are authoritative.