

## CONSTITUTION OF THE BRIDGWATER and WEST SOMERSET LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

### 1. Name and Area

- 1.1 The name of the body governed by this Constitution shall be “The Bridgwater and West Somerset Liberal Democrats”
- 1.2 The area of the Local Party shall be The Bridgwater Parliamentary Constituency.
- 1.3 and the West Somerset part of the Tiverton and Minehead Parliamentary Constituency previously in the former Bridgwater and West Somerset Constituency

### 2. Definitions

2.1 In this Constitution:

- “the Local Party” means the Bridgwater and West Somerset Liberal Democrats;
- “the Party Constitution” means the Constitutions of the Federal Party, the Liberal Democrats in England and the Western Counties Regional Party;
- “the Party” means the Liberal Democrats;
- “the Regional Party” means the Western Counties Region Liberal Democrats;
- “the Constituency” means the Parliamentary Constituency of Bridgwater and West Somerset;
- “Party’s Youth and Student Organisation” means the Affiliated Organisation representing youth and students;
- “Majority” at any meeting means majority of those present and voting;
- “Executive Committee” means the Executive Committee of the Local Party;
- “In writing” includes communication by email;
- “Signed” includes communication by email from an email address registered with the Party to that member and stating that it was sent by that member;
- “Large Single Seat” means that of a Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner or Combined Authority/Metropolitan Mayor
- “ALDC” means The Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors

### 3. Objects

3.1 The objects of the Local Party shall be:

- (a) to be the successor within its area to the Bridgwater Liberal Association, the Bridgwater SDP Area Party and former Liberal Democrat Local Parties within the Local Party area; and
- (b) to promote and support the values and objects of the Party in its area and in particular through its members and registered supporters:
- (i) to secure the election of Liberal Democrats as Members of Parliament, members of regional, local and other elected public authorities and appointments to other public or community offices;
- (ii) to admit and actively recruit new members and registered supporters to the party, encourage existing members to renew their membership and registered supporters to join the party or renew their registration;
- (iii) to participate in the formulation of the policy of the Party;
- (iv) to be recognised and approved by the Regional Party as a Local Party; to play a full role in the democratic processes of the Party; and to send representatives, in accordance with the constitutions of the bodies concerned, to Party bodies;
- (v) to play a full part in the campaigning activities of the party at all levels;
- (vi) to campaign and work with local people to achieve the objectives set out in the Preamble to the Party Constitution; and
- (vii) to promote diversity within the party and to represent the interests of under-represented groups in the locality.

#### **4. Membership and Registered Support**

- 4.1 The Local Party shall administer membership and registered support in accordance with the membership rules of the Liberal Democrats in England.
- 4.2 All persons shall be eligible to join the Local Party if they agree with the fundamental values and objectives of the party; and
- (a) they live, work or study within the area of the Local Party; or
  - (b) if not eligible under Section 4.2 (a) they acquire membership with the consent of the Regional and Local Party Executive Committees; or
  - (c) they are an MP or prospective candidate for a parliamentary, regional, subregional or local election; or a member of a local authority for a seat wholly or partly within the area of the Local Party.
- 4.3 Eligible persons shall, subject to clauses 4.4 and 4.5 of this constitution, become members of the Local Party:
- (a) on enrolment through the Local Party; or
  - (b) on enrolment through the party's online enrolment system; or
  - (c) on enrolment through the party's Youth and Student Organisation or any other enrolling AO, giving an address within the Local Party area; or
  - (d) if already a member of the party, on re-registration as a member of the Local Party.

An applicant shall become a member on acceptance by the enrolling body, payment of the requisite subscription and registration on the register kept by the Party in England.

An application shall be deemed accepted if not refused in accordance with the membership rules.

- 4.4 The Executive Committee may refuse membership to any person, on the grounds provided by the Party Constitution, using the procedure defined in the membership rules of the Party in England.
- 4.5 A membership application from a former member, previously expelled by the Party, must be approved by the Regional Party and the Party in England in addition to the Local Party.
- 4.6 Membership of the local party shall be interpreted according to the provisions of the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England and its Membership Rules, as recorded in the register kept by the Party in England. Membership will automatically lapse when the renewal subscription is three months in arrears.
- A member whose subscription is in arrears shall receive notices of meetings and elections for three months from the date at which their subscription became due.
- A member who does not renew their subscription before the end of the three-month period must reapply for membership.
- 4.7 A member of the Local Party who ceases to be eligible under Section 4.2 (a) may retain membership of the Local Party with the consent of the Executive Committee.

## 5. Officers and Executive Committee

The Secretary shall within seven days notify any change of Officers to the Regional Party and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.

### 5.1 The officers of the Local Party shall be the

- a. Chair;
- b. [Vice-Chair - smaller parties may designate another elected Officer to substitute for the Chair when necessary, rather than elect a separate Vice-Chair];
- c. Treasurer;
- d. Secretary;
- e. Elections Officer;
- f. Membership Development Officer;
- g. Diversity Champion.

The Executive should appoint members to ensure compliance of the Local Party with data protection law, and such other responsibilities as the Party may require from time to time.

[Additional Single Responsibilities (ASR) roles may be assigned to people recruited from, or co-opted to, the Executive to perform the following one-off roles (some roles may be officer roles which would be delegated to the ASR):

- a. Connect Co-ordinator;
- b. Youth and Student Co-ordinator;
- c. Press officer(s);
- d. Campaign Organiser(s)/Agent(s);
- e. Fundraising Co-ordinator(s);
- f. Chair(s) of sub-committees where appropriate;
- g. Representatives to joint committees with other Local Parties]

### 5.2 There may be an Honorary President if duly nominated and elected in accordance with the rules for nomination and election of officers laid out in Section 6 of this constitution. The term of office for any such Honorary President shall be as laid out for officers in Section 6.1.

### 5.3 The general and financial business of the Local Party shall be controlled and carried on by the Executive Committee, subject to the decisions of general meetings and in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Executive Committee shall consist of:

- a. The officers;
- b. ordinary members to be elected annually in the same manner as the officers;
- c. The party's Members of Parliament for constituencies covered by the Local Party, and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, when in post;
- d. The Local Party's approved parliamentary/Large Single Seat Agent or Organiser.
- e. A representative of the PCC/PFPC candidate's campaign team;
- f. Representatives of members in parts of the Local Party area without branches
- g. Representative(s) of the party's members from Somerset County Council representing electoral divisions within the constituency, elected by and from such members, and representative(s) of the party's members from the Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton District Councils representing wards/divisions within the constituency, elected by and from such members;]
- h. Representative(s) of the party's members from the Somerset Unitary Council(s) representing wards within the constituency, elected by and from such members;]
- i. Representative(s) elected by and from each local branch of the party's Youth and Student Organisation;]

The number of representatives from (e) to (j) should not exceed the combined number of number of officers and ordinary members as at (a) and (b).

- 5.4 The Executive Committee may co-opt additional members, for a term expiring not later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year in which they are co-opted. The power of co-option shall be used, inter alia, to ensure if possible that no more than two-thirds of the Executive Committee (other than under Sections 5.3 (d) - (i)), identify as the same gender, and that there is fair representation of under-represented groups in the locality, with the intention of creating an executive that reflects the community the Local Party serves.
- 5.5 The Honorary President is entitled to attend all meetings of the Executive Committee. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be open to members of the Local Party as space permits.
- 5.6 The Executive Committee may fill any vacancy occurring among the officers or the ordinary members. Any vacancy in the Chair shall be filled from amongst the existing Executive Committee members.
- 5.7 The Executive Committee may assign special responsibilities to any of its members, including duties which would otherwise pertain to one of the officers. The executive shall designate an officer to deputise for the Chair if the Chair is [and Vice Chair are both] unavailable.
- 5.8 The Officers shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee within one month after taking office. The Executive Committee shall meet at least quarterly. The Secretary shall give at least 7 days' notice of meetings to all members of the Executive Committee. One-third of its members shall form a quorum. [A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects. Any decisions taken at such a meeting or by email between meetings must be ratified at the next quorate meeting of the executive].
- 5.9 The Executive Committee may appoint sub-committees for any specified purpose. No subcommittee or Executive Committee member may take action on behalf of the Executive Committee beyond their terms of appointment. All sub-committees shall report on their activities to the Executive Committee and may include persons who are not members of the Executive Committee and may delegate authority to take actions on their behalf. The Executive Committee may also delegate authority to committees jointly constituted with other Local Parties for particular purposes.
- 5.10 In urgent circumstances the Chair or, if unavailable, the Vice-Chair), in conjunction with a minimum of two other officers, may act on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Chair (or Vice Chair) shall report such actions to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 5.11 The Executive Committee will set out a long-term development plan as to how it will achieve its objectives as set out in clause 3.1 (b) and in particular in the following areas:
  - (i) increasing its membership and the diversity of that membership
  - (ii) a training plan to improve the skills and activity levels of those members
  - (iii) improving its fundraising
  - (iv) objectives for each set of local elections or shared local elections with neighbouring Local Parties that cover its area for Counties, Mayoral, Regional Assemblies and Police (Fire)

and Crime Commissioners, with the intention of standing a candidate in every available seat.

(v) using local by-elections to train local activists and develop campaigning skills

(vi) improving its performance at each Parliamentary election

That plan should as a minimum be reviewed and updated in conjunction with the Regional Party after each full cycle of local elections and each Parliamentary election. The Executive should report on the progress of the plan at each AGM.

## **6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee**

6.1 The officers and ordinary members shall be elected by and from members of the Local Party at the time of the Annual General Meeting (AGM), provided that, with the prior agreement of the Regional Party, a member of the party who is not a member of the Local Party may be elected to the office of Treasurer. If an election is contested, there shall be a full [postal/electronic] ballot following the meeting, in which all Local Party members are sent a [ballot] / [a personal link to an electronic voting system] within 7 days after the AGM and which must be returned to the Returning Officer within 21 days after the AGM

The term of office of officers and ordinary members shall be from the 1<sup>st</sup> January following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> December. They shall be eligible for re-election, save that the Chair shall not serve for more than three consecutive one-year terms and shall not be eligible for re-election as Chair for two terms after leaving office.

6.2 Nominations for election shall be invited in the notice summoning the AGM, and shall close at the AGM, but not before the reception of the Chair's and Treasurer's reports. They must be proposed and seconded, and except in the case of nominations made at the AGM, shall be in writing signed by the proposer, seconder and candidate.

6.3 No person may be elected to hold more than one office or may be elected to be both an officer and an ordinary member. Elections for officers shall be counted in the order listed in Section 5.1 and for ordinary members after officers. Any votes cast for candidates already elected to office shall be transferred according to the voters' subsequent preferences.

6.4 All contested elections under this constitution shall be by secret ballot by the Single Transferable Vote method in accordance with election rules made under the party constitutions.

6.5 The Executive Committee shall appoint some disinterested person to act as Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall be entirely responsible for running the elections, including the receipt of nominations and for the preparation and distribution of ballots, their receipt and counting on return, and the declaration of the results.

6.6 Accidental failure to dispatch notice of the AGM or a ballot in due time or at all to a person entitled to vote shall not invalidate an election or be treated as an irregularity, unless a substantial number of persons entitled to vote have not received notices or ballots at all or have received them too late to make it practicable to attend the meeting or return the ballot in due time.

6.7 An unsuccessful candidate who alleges that there has been or may have been an irregularity in the election may within one calendar month after the declaration of the result ask for an investigation by the Regional Party in accordance with the party constitutions. Subject to any order made after such an investigation, no irregularity shall invalidate an election.

6.8 The Returning Officer may extend the time for distribution and return of ballots where there are special circumstances making it necessary to do so.

## **7. General Meetings**

7.1 The AGM shall be on a day appointed by the Executive Committee, between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Executive Committee may postpone the AGM if it would conflict with a Parliamentary election in the constituency/local authority area, or for other urgent reason.

7.2 The business of the AGM shall include:

- a. to receive a report from the Chair on the activities of the Local Party and the Executive Committee since the previous AGM, including progress with the development plan;
- b. to note the accounts of the Local Party for the previous financial year together with an independent report on those accounts, and to receive a report from the Treasurer including a statement of the current financial position and an outline budget for the following year;
- c. to appoint for the current financial year (i) auditors if required by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or (ii) a person(s) to produce an independent report on the accounts for a General Meeting;
- d. to receive reports from each Liberal Democrat council group on which Local Party members serve;
- e. to transact any other business specified by the constitutions or directed by the Executive Committee;
- f. to consider any motion which has been submitted by any member of the Local Party to the Secretary, in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
- g. to receive nominations for the election of officers, ordinary members of the Executive Committee and any elected sub-committees or joint committees;

7.3 The Secretary shall give all members at least 21 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM (or access links and codes for an online AGM or online access to an AGM). Such notice shall specify all business to be conducted at the meeting.

7.4 The AGM may (on notification to the Secretary prior to the start of the meeting) by a two-thirds majority agree to consider urgent or important business which has arisen since notice of the AGM was given.

7.5 An Extraordinary General Meeting may be convened by the officers, or by the Executive Committee; and shall, on receipt of a requisition signed by at least twenty members of the Local Party (or one-fifth of the membership if less), be convened by the Secretary so as to be held within 28 days from the receipt of such requisition. At least 14 days written notice shall be given to all members. The meeting shall only consider business stated in the notice convening it. Failure to convene a validly requisitioned meeting within 14 days shall permit the meeting to be convened on behalf of (and at the expense of) the Local Party by any of the original requisitioners. In an emergency, the officers may convene a meeting giving such notice as they consider sufficient in the circumstances.

7.6 Twenty members (or one-fifth of the membership if fewer), shall form a quorum at any general meeting. A quorum is not required to receive reports and accounts. [A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects except as provided for in Sections 5.8 and 11.1.]

- 7.7 Notice and minutes of all Annual and Special General Meetings shall be sent to the Secretary of the Regional Party.
- 7.8 Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of all general meetings. A hard copy must be made of any electronic Minutes files and retained in a Minutes book/file. The Minutes book must be retained and handed on to successor Officers by the start of each term of office. Minutes shall also be kept of any meetings of the Executive Committee. In the absence of an Executive Committee member charged with the duty, the Meeting shall appoint a member to take minutes. Hard copies shall be made and retained as for general meetings.
- 7.9 Details of any proposed amendment to this constitution shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.

## **7 [Local Branches**

- 8.1 The Executive Committee may authorise the setting up of branches except that no branch shall be formed with fewer than 10 members. The objects of a branch shall be to further the objects of the Local Party in the area covered by the branch. The branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.
- 8.2 The membership of the Branch and the rules for operation of the Branch shall be as detailed in Appendix LP2 of this constitution.
- 8.3 The Executive Committee may authorise the dissolution of branches, subject to the provisions of 8.3 of this constitution.
- 8.4 A Branch may be dissolved or suspended by the Executive Committee on the grounds that:
- (a) it is no longer functioning or able to hold such a meeting;
  - (b) there have been serious irregularities in the conduct of the affairs of the Branch;
  - (c) the affairs of the Branch have not been conducted in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, its Constitution, this Constitution or the Party Constitution;
  - (d) the membership of the Branch has fallen below 10; or
  - (e) the affairs of the Branch are being conducted in a manner contrary to the interests of the Local Party as a whole.
- 8.5 If a Branch is dissolved or suspended, any member of the branch may request that the Regional Party conduct an investigation if they believe that the process has not been conducted in accordance with the correct constitutional process or without valid evidence. The Local Party shall not dissolve a branch until the branch has been given an opportunity to hold its own general meeting.
- 8.6 The funds of a Branch shall, upon dissolution, be applied in paying its debts, and any surplus shall be added to the funds of the Local Party.]

## **9. Candidates for and Elections to Public Office**

- 9.1 When it is necessary to select a Prospective Parliamentary or Large Single Seat candidate, the procedure shall be as provided by the Party constitutions. The Executive Committee may appoint a subcommittee to carry out its duties under this procedure. For each Parliamentary constituency which has at least 30 members the vote on selection for a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for that constituency shall be by the members

registered in that constituency.

For any Parliamentary constituency which has fewer than 30 members,

- a) Either: the constituency lies in more than one local party, in which case the vote on selection for a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for that constituency shall be by all the members of each Local Party which covers part of the constituency;
- b) Or: the local party/parties is/are a branch of the Region, or qualify to be so because of an overall Local Party membership of fewer than 30 people, in which case the vote on selection for a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate shall be by all the members living in that constituency and all members of the executive committee of the Regional Party.

- 9.2 The Local Party Executive Committee shall seek to ensure that, so far as practicable, all seats within the constituencies and seats in local authority wards and divisions wholly or partly within the local party area are contested by Liberal Democrat candidates, unless the Executive Committee, Regional Party and, in the case of Large Single Seats or Westminster elections, the Liberal Democrats in England, are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the party in any specific case not to do so. If the Local Party wishes not to stand a candidate, the Executive must have the agreement of the Regional and English Parties in the case of Westminster and Large Single Seat elections or the Regional Party in the case of local authority elections.
- 9.3 When it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates for an electoral area, the branch or if there is no branch, the Local Party shall hold a [general meeting at]/[postal/online ballot in] which all members who are resident in the electoral area concerned may vote. The timetable shall be agreed by the branch committee and the Executive Committee, or where there is no branch by the Executive Committee.
- 9.4 The Elections Officer will maintain a list of members approved to stand as candidates in local elections, according to the rules of the Party in England and guidance provided on the Federal Party web site, and following the procedures approved by ALDC. The executive may select any other member, conditional upon subsequent approval by the executive or delegated approvals panel.
- 9.5 As a condition of approval, prospective candidates shall be required to agree to make a financial contribution towards Liberal Democrat Party activities in the event of their election to the relevant authority. The level of contribution shall be set at a minimum of 10% of the individual's gross allowances from the relevant local authority. There shall be a mechanism by which cases of hardship/financial distress are identified, and only through this mechanism may a contribution be lowered or exempted. Town and parish council candidates are exempt from this condition.
- 9.6 In any local electoral area, in which the eligible electorate for voting in the selection does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to constitute the members living in the electoral area plus the members of the Executive Committee
- 9.7 In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a [general meeting]/[postal/online ballot] the [branch committee, or if there is no branch the Executive Committee]/[the Executive Committee]/[the candidates committee] may appoint the candidate.
- 9.8 Where an elected authority covers more than one Local Party area or crosses Local Party boundaries, the Executive Committees of the Local Parties concerned must agree to form appropriate joint arrangements to co-ordinate candidate approval and selection, campaigning, fund-raising and publicity and be responsible for the formulation of policy



on that authority. Such arrangements must be minuted by each of the Local Parties involved and shall remain in force, notwithstanding any subsequent change of officers or Executive Committee.

- 9.9 The Local Party will submit to the Federal Party's Nominating Officer the name of a suitable person to act as the Delegated Nominating Officer (DNO). The DNO shall act in accordance with the Rules made by the Party for DNOs.
- 9.10 If a member of the Local Party stands at any public election as a candidate or agent, in opposition to a properly nominated candidate of the party, an officer of the Local Party shall immediately inform the Standards Officer at Liberal Democrat HQ as their membership may be revoked under the English and Federal Constitutions.
- 9.11 Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the party must be a current member of the party from the point of nomination throughout the campaign.
- 9.12 If at any time the Local Party considers entering into an electoral pact, the Executive Committee must obtain the prior agreement of the Regional Party before any negotiations take place; the final outcome must meet objectives agreed under protocols established by the Party in England and be approved by the Regional Party.
- 9.13 A Local Party wishing to de-select a candidate for a Westminster or Large Single Seat must contact the Chair of the regional candidates committee and proceed according to their protocols.
- 9.14 A Local Party wishing to de-select a candidate for a local election must contact ALDC and follow their advice.

## **10. Finance**

- 10.1 The Local Party's accounting period shall be annual, starting on 1st January and ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December each year.
- 10.2 The Treasurer shall keep, maintain for six years and pass to their successor accounting records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA).
- 10.3 The Treasurer shall ensure that no donation greater than that permitted by PERA is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Executive Committee and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 10.4 The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts for Local Party finances which shall be approved by the Executive Committee and if required by the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000 shall be audited.
- 10.5 The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Local Party together with an independent report to a meeting of the Local Party executive for approval. When signed, the Treasurer and the Local Party Chair shall submit them to the Federal Party for reporting under PERA rules in the manner designated by the Federal Party no later than 31st March following the end of the financial year. A copy of the accounts shall also be sent to the Regional Party.
- 10.6 (a) The Local Party shall maintain one or more bank or other appropriate accounts in the name of the Local Party for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the signature of at least two officers who shall not come solely from members of any one family. The Local Party may maintain further accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.  
(b) The Local Party may take advantage of electronic banking facilities if they are provided by

its bankers as long as appropriate safeguards are put in place by the Executive Committee to agree expenditure and cash movements both at Executive meetings and by a minimum of two officers in between meetings in advance of such expenditure or movements taking place. Where such action is taken between meetings it will be reported back to the next Executive meeting.

10.7 If the Local Party fails by 15<sup>th</sup> January to notify the Chief Executive of the Federal Party of the appointment of a Chair and a Treasurer, the Local Party shall automatically be suspended.

10.8 Such property as the Local Party may own or lease (whether physical or held in long-term investments) shall be acquired, held and disposed of through a Trust.

For a new trust, the Local Party Executive Committee shall appoint (insert number no less than three and no more than five) Trustees to manage the asset on behalf of the Local Party who shall hold office for a period of five years but be eligible for re-appointment by the Executive and if at any time the number of trustees shall fall below (insert number no less than three and no more than five) immediate steps shall be taken by the Executive to appoint a new trustee. A document (which may be the trust deed) shall be drawn up setting out the responsibilities and indemnification of the Trustees in carrying out their duties on behalf of the Local Party. This document should be signed by the Chair and Treasurer of the Local Party and the appointed trustees.

For an existing trust, the Executive Committee shall follow the above procedure as closely as possible, consistent with the trust deeds.

## **11. Constitution and Interpretation**

11.1 Amendments may only be made by a two-thirds majority at a quorate general meeting. No amendment shall be made which conflicts with the constitutions of the Party or of the Regional Party. Any amendment to this constitution shall not come into force until approved by the Regional Party.

11.2 Details of any proposed amendment to this constitution shall be sent to all members with the notice of the general meeting.

11.3 If the Model Constitution for Local Parties (England) is amended, any provision of this constitution shall be deemed to be correspondingly amended, unless the Local Party resolves in accordance with 11.1 above at a quorate general meeting held within 6 months of receiving notice of the amendment not to accept it.

11.4 One copy of the constitution shall be deposited with the Secretary/Administrator of the Regional Party; and one shall be kept with the minute book of the Local Party. Any member shall be provided with a copy of the constitution on request.

11.5 In the event of any question of interpretation arising, or any question on which this constitution is silent, the Executive Committee shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the constitution, subject to decisions of the English Council, Articles 3 and 9 of the constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England and Article 4 of the Constitution of the Federal Party.

11.6 No word or construction in this constitution shall be taken to imply any discrimination

whatsoever with regard to any ground other than political belief or practice.

- 11.7 In the event of the dissolution or suspension of the Local Party, the assets of the Local Party shall vest in the Regional Party on trust for the future reconstitution of the Local Party, unless explicitly provided otherwise by a general meeting in the event of dissolution pursuant upon boundary changes and subject to the agreement of the Regional Party.
- 11.8 A Local Party, by agreement at a general meeting, may dissolve itself in order to facilitate the creation of one or more new Local Parties, subject to the approval of its Regional Party and prior notification to the Compliance function at party headquarters; HQ must be notified no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November in the year preceding the proposed change, in order that appropriate adjustments made be made to data and other systems held by the party.

- i. **The role of the Chair** is to:
  - a. Chair Local Party, general and executive meetings
  - b. Act as the point of communication with HQ and the region
  - c. Ensure compliance (along with the Treasurer) with PPERA
  - d. If another member is not so appointed, ensure compliance with data protection law
  - e. Ensures compliance to party constitution
  - f. Manage the local development plan and ensure it is fulfilled
  - g. Oversee Parliamentary candidate selection with the support of the Elections Officer
  - h. Ensure that the Local Party maintains the standards and practice expected
  
- ii. **The role of the Vice-Chair** is to:
  - a. Deputise for the Chair if they are ever unavailable or at the request of the Chair,
  - b. Chair Local Party, general and Executive Committee meetings if and when the Chair is absent or otherwise unable to chair such meetings, or at the request of the Chair,
  - c. Proactively assist the Chair in the fulfilment of their responsibilities to and on behalf of the Local Party,
  - d. Proactively work with the other officers to assist them in their duties as necessary,
  - e. Be responsible for the fulfilment of responsibilities associated with any vacant officer position until it is filled, reporting to the Executive Committee on such responsibilities whilst it remains vacant.
  
- iii. **The role of the Secretary** is to:
  - a. Produce agendas and minutes for meetings
  - b. Manage the diary of events to avoid clashes
  - c. Inform the Chief Executive of the Federal Party and the secretary of the Regional Party of executive officer appointments and other matters required by this constitution apart from finance
  - d. Consult the Local Party constitution
  - e. Other administrative tasks
  
- iv. **The role of the Treasurer** is to:
  - a. Prepare and monitor the yearly budget
  - b. Submit PPERA reports
  - c. Oversee fundraising targets
  - d. Liaise with election agents
  - e. Keep accounts ready for audit
  
- v. **The role of the Membership Development Officer** is to:
  - a. Organise and run recruitment campaigns
  - b. Follow up 'At Risk' members
  - c. Ensure there is a range of events, social and political (in co-operation with the Secretary)
  - d. Encourage members to move on to Direct Debit payments
  - e. Secure accurate records of local party membership in the Federal Party's central membership system
  - f. Check regularly for new members, welcome them and organize new member interviews
  - g. Inform the Executive Committee of new members, in accordance with Section 4.4 of this Constitution
  - h. Produce a regular members' newsletter (work with others)

- vi. **The role of the Elections Officer** is to:
  - a. Ensure the Local Party has top line electoral objectives agreed for at least five years ahead to guide campaigning activity
  - b. Ensure the Local Party has an agreed annual campaign plan, and supporting budget in consultation with the Treasurer
  - c. Form and oversee the smooth running of a constituency campaign team charged with delivering the agreed campaign plan within the agreed budget
  - d. Ensure the Local Party obtains the marked registers after every election and that the data is entered into the party's system for recording electoral data
  - e. Provide support to the Chair in the selection of Parliamentary candidates
  
- vii. **The role of the Diversity Champion** is to:
  - a. Develop an understanding of the diverse communities in the area of the Local Party
  - b. Identify under-representation of those communities within the Local Party and the executive/officer roles
  - c. Work with the Local Party executive to devise and promote a strategy to engage members of under-represented groups, to encourage them to join the party and to support them to become active in the management and decision-making processes of the Local and wider Party
  - d. Develop links with community group

1. The members of the branch shall be:
  - a. All members of the Local Party whose registered membership address (as defined in the membership rules of the Liberal Democrats in England) is within the branch area, unless they have opted to be a member of another branch;
  - b. Any councillor who represents a ward or division falling wholly or partially within the branch area and who opts to be a member of the branch;
  - c. Other members of the Local Party who wish to be members, if the branch's committee and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.

No person who is not a member of the Local Party may be a member of the branch. No person may be a member of more than one branch.

2. A branch shall not be entitled to require a subscription from its members, but the Executive Committee of the Local Party may agree to remit part of its subscription income to a branch. A branch shall not incur any debts for which the Local Party shall be responsible.
3. Each branch shall be governed by a constitution which shall provide for:
  - a. a committee which shall include officers and ordinary Members and may include ex-officio and co-opted members;
  - b. rules for election of officers, ordinary members of the branch committee and representatives to the Local Party Executive Committee;
  - c. rules for the calling and conduct of an annual general meeting and other general meetings of the members;
  - d. the names and addresses of the officers, ordinary members and representatives to be notified, and minutes of general and committee meetings to be supplied to, the Secretary of the Local Party.

The constitution shall be in the form of the model constitution for branches appended to this constitution in Appendix LP3. A branch may adopt a constitution which is not wholly in the model form but any such constitution, or any changes to it, shall not take effect until the Executive Committee of the Local Party accepts its conformity with the party constitution and with this constitution.

4. The finances of the branch shall be held by the Treasurer of the Local Party as part of the funds of the Local Party and subject to section 10 of the constitution.
5. The Branch may appoint a substitute representative to the Executive Committee to fill a casual vacancy, or if a representative is unable to attend a particular meeting.
6. A Branch may dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting; on the grounds that:
  - a. it is no longer functioning or able to hold such a meeting;
  - b. there have been serious irregularities in the conduct of the affairs of the branch;
  - c. the affairs of the branch have not been conducted in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or with its Constitution, this Constitution or the Party Constitution;
  - d. the membership of the branch has fallen below 10; or
  - e. the affairs of the branch are being conducted in a manner contrary to the interests of the Local Party as a whole.

## NOTES ON THIS MODEL CONSTITUTION

This model constitution is recommended to Local Parties in England, to be adapted as necessary to suit local circumstances.

The symbol (...) indicates a suitable value to be fixed by the Local Party. Defaults are defined below.

Words and sections in square brackets [...] are optional and Local Parties may choose to include or omit them, subject to the requirements detailed below. By default they are all included (with the first alternatives in Sections 7.2(h), 9.1, 9.3 and 9.6).

If amended, the document adopted should be forwarded to the Regional Party to confirm that it conforms with the Party Constitution. There are some sections, indicated below, where variation is likely to conflict with the Party Constitution.

### Change to Disciplinary Procedure

Local Parties are no longer involved at any stage of disciplinary procedures. Issues of concern should be forwarded to the Standards Officer at LDHQ: [standardsofficer@libdems.org.uk](mailto:standardsofficer@libdems.org.uk)  
Local Parties must not initiate any form of investigation or action other than reporting to the Standards Officer.

## 1,2. Name and Definitions

The name should be taken from the [constituency]/[local authority], and may optionally include the word “Constituency” or “Local”.

A Local Party covering more than one constituency will wish to choose a suitable form for its name, to define the several constituencies. Changes throughout this constitution are necessary to reflect such a Local Party’s multi-constituency structure. Otherwise the definitions should not be changed.

## 3. Objects

Should not be subtracted from but Local Parties might wish to add additional objects, for instance the provision of social facilities for members.

## 4. Membership

Should not generally be changed. The powers of the Executive Committee might be reduced or transferred to general meetings.

## 5. Officers and Executive Committee

Every Local Party must have a Chair and a Treasurer, which is a legal requirement under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act. The same person cannot combine the offices of Chair and Treasurer.

Local Parties might decide to:

- a. elect extra officers, e.g. Social Secretary, Press Officer;
- b. remove the casting vote of the Chair, or give the Chair a casting vote only;
- c. dispense with the honorary office of President .

Local Parties should fix the scale of branch, direct, councillor and youth/student representation on the Executive Committee on an equitable basis and to accord with local circumstances. Either the number of direct representatives (b), or representatives per Branch (c) must be sufficient to enable fair representation of

opinions within the Local Party. A minimum of 6 is recommended in one class. Unless the Local Party has a small number of large wards/branches the larger number would be in class (b).

The default numbers in Section 5.3 are 10 in (b), 1 and 2 in (c), 1 each in (e) and (g) and 3 in (f). The relevant County and District/Borough/Unitary Council names should be inserted in (e) and (f). If the Local Party area covers more than one District/Borough, each council group may be represented separately or jointly, depending on local circumstances.

Section 5.3 (e) may be dispensed with where there is no County Council.

The list of categories of Executive Committee members should not be subtracted from but may be increased in special circumstances.

If there are Ordinary Members the number of co-opted Members in 5.4 may not be more than the number of Ordinary Members. If there are no Ordinary Members then the Local Party must determine the maximum number of co-opted Members. The default number is ten.

The Executive Committee is required to meet at least quarterly. More frequent (e.g. monthly) meetings may be appropriate. If the Executive Committee only meets quarterly, it might be appropriate to provide for a "Finance and General Purposes Committee", by whatever name is preferred, with specific make-up and powers, to meet more often.

## **6. Elections**

Most changes to the provisions for election and holding office would conflict with the Federal Constitution.

Elections can be by postal / electronic ballot of all members or by the members present at the AGM. The same method of election should be used for Officers and Ordinary Members.

Local Parties should appoint a person who is a not candidate, a close relative of a candidate or the proposer or seconder of a candidate ("a disinterested person") as Returning Officer. Local Parties anticipating contested elections may wish to ask their Regional Party to nominate a person from outside the Local Party to act as Returning Officer. The election rules referred to in section 6.7 are those approved by Federal Conference for the Federal Party Committee elections and can be found in the full versions of the Party Constitution on the party website. Every candidate in a contested election should be provided with the rules by the Returning Officer within 24 hours of the close of nominations.

If a Local Party chooses to supplement these rules with its own additions these should be agreed by a General Meeting of members.

No variation from the rules or Returning Officer's rulings shall be made without them being copied to all candidates in the election at the same time.

## **7. General Meetings**

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution. Provisions could be added, notice periods could be lengthened or a large Local Party might decide to raise the required quorum.



## **8. Local Branches**

It is for the Local Party to decide whether it wishes to have a branch structure. If it does not then the whole of Section 8 together with the references to branches in Section 9 should be deleted.

If the Local Party wishes to have a branch structure, the provisions in Appendix LP2 set out the necessary rules. A 'Model Constitution for Branches' is appended (Appendix LP3) and should be followed but may be varied by branches with the agreement of the Local Party executive.

## **9. Candidates and Elections**

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution. The Party Constitution and rules made by the Joint States Candidates Committee cover Parliamentary Candidate selection. Regional Parties will make rules for the selection of candidates for Regional Government. City/Borough/District Mayors are Local Government elections and Local Party Constitutions should make appropriate provision for the selection of Mayoral Candidates. 9.7 will apply where the Local Government area covers more than one Local Party.

The last sentence of 9.1 only applies to a Local Party covering more than one Constituency. Only one of the electoral college options, before or after the "/", should then be included.

A Local Party should determine which method to use for local election candidate selection - a General Meeting or a postal/electronic ballot and whether the selection is to be done by only the members in the relevant electoral area, by all members of the Branch or by all members of the Local Party. 9.3 should then be adapted accordingly. It is automatically provided that the Local Party undertakes the selection where there is no branch. 9.5 provides a minimum number of members for selections by electoral areas. This provision is not needed when selection is by all members of the Local Party or all members of the branch, when the relevant minimum numbers are specified in other provisions.

9.6 provides for the selection procedure when a selection has to be conducted at short notice, as is often the case for by-elections. The Local Party should decide whether emergency selections are to be by the branch committee (where there is one) or by the Local Party executive.

## **10. Finance**

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution and with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

In 10.5 the Local Party may wish to provide for a Special General Meeting to be held reasonably soon after the financial year-end on 31st December to consider the annual accounts. In that event at the end of this paragraph a date should be inserted, for example 28<sup>th</sup> February or 31<sup>st</sup> March. The reference to the accounts being approved by the AGM in 7.2(b) should then be deleted but not the references to a Treasurer's report and budget. Where Local Party accounts are required to be submitted to the Electoral Commission and published, where the Local Party's gross income or total expenditure is over the threshold from time to time determined by legislation or party rules, early

approval of the accounts by a Special General Meeting is recommended.

The officers whose signatures are required to draw money might be specified more precisely in 10.6, especially if extra officers have been created; Local Party bank accounts must not be operated on a single signature or by two members of the same family.

#### **11. Constitution and Interpretation**

None of the points in this section should be omitted. Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution and rules made to ensure the Party's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000.

---

## APPENDIX LP3 – MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR BRANCHES

### Constitution of the “... Branch of the ... Liberal Democrats”

#### 1. Name

- 1.1 The name of the Branch shall be “... Branch Liberal Democrats.”

#### 2. Objectives

- 2.1 The objects of the Branch shall be to further the objects of the ... Liberal Democrats (the “Local Party”) within the area covered by the Branch.

#### 3. Branch area

- 3.1 The ... branch area will be that part of the area of the ... Local Party in ... [wards]/[divisions].

#### 4. Members

- 4.1 The members of the Branch shall be:
- a. All members of the Local Party whose registered membership address (as defined in the Membership Rules of the Party in England) is within the branch area, unless they have opted to be a member of another Branch;
  - b. Any councillor who represents a ward or division falling wholly or partially within the branch area and who opts to be a member of the branch;
  - c. Other members of the Local Party who wish to be members, if the branch’s executive and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.
- 4.2 No person who is not a member of the Local Party may be a member of the branch.
- 4.3 No person may be a member of more than one branch.
- 4.4 The branch may not levy a membership fee on its members.

#### 5. Officers and Executive

- 5.1 The Officers of the Branch shall be
- a. Chair
  - b. Secretary and
  - c. Membership Development Officer  
and shall be elected annually.
- 5.2 The general business of the branch shall be conducted by a committee (the “Executive”), subject to the decisions of General Meetings. The Executive shall consist of:
- a. The Officers;
  - b. (...) Ordinary Members, elected annually;
  - c. (...) representatives elected annually by and from the branch’s members on (...) County/District/Borough/Unitary/Parish/Town Councils representing wards/divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area;

## THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

- d. (...) representatives elected annually by and from members of the Party's Youth and Student Organisation who are also members of the Branch.

5.3 The executive may co-opt up to (...) additional members, for a term expiring not later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year in which they are co-opted.

**Note: the number of co-optees should not exceed the number of ordinary members.**

5.4 The Executive may fill any vacancy occurring among the Officers or Ordinary Members. Any vacancy amongst the Officers shall, if possible, be filled from amongst the other members of the Executive.

5.5 In urgent circumstances, the Officers may act on behalf of the Executive. They shall report on all such actions to the next meeting of the Executive.

### 6. Elections of Executive Members and others

6.3 The Officers and Ordinary Members and any representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee, as provided for in the Local Party's constitution, shall be elected by and from the members of the Branch at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the single transferable vote (STV) and secret ballot [in which all branch members are sent ballots/links to an online ballot].

6.4 The term of office for Officers and Ordinary Members shall be from 1<sup>st</sup> January following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> December.

6.5 The [executive]/[Local Party] shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election of Officers and Ordinary Members before the issue of notice of the AGM under 7.3. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Federal constitution and the constitution of the party in England, the membership rules of the Party in England and any rules made by the Local Party.

6.6 Representatives from the party's councillors and the Youth and Student organisation shall be elected according to rules set by the relevant Council Group(s) and the Youth and Student organisation.

6.7 The names and addresses of all Executive members shall be kept by the Secretary and provided to the Secretary of the Local Party within seven days of their election or of any change of Officers.

6.8 The Executive may appoint substitute representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee if there is a casual vacancy or an elected representative is not able to be present at a meeting.

**Note: This should only be included if the Local Party's constitution permits (see section 5 of the 'Rules for Branches' in the model Local Party constitution).**

### 7. General meetings

7.1 The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be on a day and at a time and place decided by the Executive, not before 1<sup>st</sup> October and not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Executive may postpone an AGM if it would conflict with any public election involving the branch's area. The Local Party may require the AGM to be held before the AGM of

the Local Party or before some other particular date.

- 7.2 The business of the AGM shall be:
- a. To receive reports from all the Officers on their activities in the last year;
  - b. To receive reports from councillors representing wards or divisions falling wholly or partially within the branch area (if such people exist);
  - c. To consider any motion which has been submitted by any two members of the branch to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
  - d. Any other business specified by the constitution or directed by the Executive.
- 7.3 The Secretary shall give all members at least 14 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM.
- 7.4 A Special General Meeting may be convened by the Officers, the Executive or on receipt of a requisition signed by at least one fifth of the branch's membership. Such a meeting shall be convened within 28 days of being requested, and with members being given at least 14 days written notice of its time and place. It shall only conduct business stated in the notice calling it.
- 7.5 Five members shall form the quorum at any General Meeting.
- 7.6 Notice and minutes of all General Meetings and Executive Meetings shall be kept by the Secretary and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the Local Party.

## **8. Candidates for public office**

- 8.1 The Branch shall perform the tasks prescribed by the constitution of the Local Party in connection with the selection of local government candidates for any electoral area within its area, and in conjunction with the appropriate adjoining branch(es) or the Local Party for any electoral areas lying only partially within the branch's area.
- 8.2 The Executive shall seek to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all seats within its area on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party.
- 8.3 Where it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates, for either Principal Local Authorities or parish or town councils:
- a. The Executive shall ensure that any candidate approval process specified by the Local Party is followed;
  - b. The timetable for the selection shall be agreed by the executive, in consultation with the executive of the Local Party;
  - c. The Branch shall hold a [general meeting]/[postal ballot]/[online ballot], in which all members who are resident in the electoral area concerned [or of the branch] may vote. If the eligible electorate does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to include members of the branch executive;
  - d. The election shall be held by Single Transferable Vote (STV) and secret ballot;
  - e. The [executive][Local Party] shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Local Party constitution, the constitutions of the Party in England and the Federal Party, the membership rules of the Party in England and any rules made by the Local Party.
  - f. In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a [meeting]/[postal/electronic ballot] the executive may select the candidate;

## THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

- g. Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the party must be a current member of the party.
- 8.4 For the period of a local government election within its area, the executive will resolve to suspend the activities of the Branch and to invest an Agent or Agents with the authority to act on its behalf in the conduct of the election campaign.
- 8.5 The suspension of the Local Party due to the holding of an election shall have the effect of also suspending the branch's activities for the same period.
- 8.6 During the selection of Large Single Seat and Parliamentary candidates, the branch and its members shall comply with the relevant selection rules.

### 9. Finance

- 9.1 The finances of the branch shall be held by the Treasurer of the Local Party as part of the funds of the Local Party and subject to the constitution of the Local Party.

### 10. Constitution and interpretation

- 10.1 Amendments to this constitution may only be made by a two-third majority at a General Meeting. Details of any proposed change shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.
- 10.2 Any changes to this constitution shall only come into force after being approved by the Executive Committee of the Local Party. No amendment may be made or approved which would conflict with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or with the constitutions of the Local Party, the Party in England, Federal Party or the membership rules of the Party in England.
- 10.3 A copy of this constitution shall be kept by the Secretary and sent to the Local Party Secretary.
- 10.4 In the event of any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Constitution of the Local Party shall be followed.
- 10.5 The Branch may choose to dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting, or may be dissolved following the procedure laid out in the Local Party's constitution. The funds of the branch shall, if dissolved, be applied first to paying its debts, with any surplus being added to the funds of the Local Party.
- 10.6 The Executive shall perform the same functions as that of a "Branch Committee" under the Local Party's constitution.

The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.

