**Liberal Party Special Assembly – 5th January 2019**

**Motions for debate**

**House of Lord reform**

The Liberal Party has consistently called for the House of Lords to be abolished as it is and replaced by a predominately elected Senate.

We have a policy that articulates the view that at least 2/3 should be elected and that there should be provision for elected representation from our overseas territories such as Channel islands, Gibraltar and Falkland Islands.

Data compiled by the Electoral Reform Society found 455 Lords claimed more than the average take home pay in the UK during 2016/2017 despite the House of Lords sitting no more than 141 days in that year.

In 2016/17 the allowance and travel costs for the House of Lords came to over £19 million.

It is estimated 33 inactive peers collected £462,510 tax free.

Of the current peers 109 peers had not spoken in one year with claims exceeding £1m.

The most active peers numbering 300 accounted for 84% of votes cast in the House of Lords.

We would propose we should campaign for a new Senate with 300 members who would be elected by the single transferable vote (STV) , with an offer of seats for Overseas Territories such as the Isle of Man, Channel islands, Gibraltar, and the Falkland islands.

Lastly we would suggest there is no reason why members of the House Of Lords should be tax exempt. Their income should be subject to income tax akin with any other UK resident

**Leasehold Reform**

As Liberals we believe in fairness and protection for people living in leasehold and those in shared ownership properties.

We attach a copy of a motion which was unanimously agreed by Liverpool City Council at the November 2018 council meeting and we encourage members serving on other authorities to move and seek approval of a similar motion.

**Fair Deal for Leaseholders**

This Council expresses its severe dissatisfaction with this Government’s failure to adequately regulate the sale of leasehold properties within the UK, and tackle the onerous terms of existing leases. It notes its concern for the financial burdens suffered by homeowners, due to unregulated developer practices, and the unacceptable terms of leases.

It notes concern for residents, who find themselves unable to sell their homes, except for a considerable discount, following the public’s increasing awareness of the struggles affecting leasehold homeowners.

It welcomes pledges to address the matter; however, expresses frustration regarding the extent of this Government’s plans, and its commitment to support those already affected by unfair practices, and charges.

This Council resolves that this Government takes urgent action to address:-

a) The soaring ground rent charges that existing leaseholders are obliged to pay to developers, or the companies to which the freehold has been sold;

b) The disturbing practice of freeholders selling the freehold to third parties, without the knowledge of the existing leaseholders, and without first offering the leaseholder the option of purchasing the freehold;

c) Increasingly unaffordable estate maintenance charges levied against the leaseholders, and spiralling costs;

d) The unclear, and in many cases, excessive cost of the purchase of freeholds by leaseholders;

e) The unfair systems of administration charges imposed via the lease, to the hindrance of (for example) leaseholders who wish to make alterations to the property;

f) The actions of freeholders who continue to claim administration fees, following transfer, through the wrongful practice of including restrictive covenants in transfer deeds, to in an attempt to replicate these shameful terms of the lease.

g) The requirement of existing leaseholders to have owned the lease for a minimum period, before being eligible to purchase the freehold;

h) The lack of advice and adequate compensation schemes available to leaseholders who believe they have been miss-sold, and/or their lease contains onerous conditions.

We also ask all Liberal Party Councillors to ensure that when councils sell land they use their influence to ensure that land sold for houses is freehold.

**North Ireland Boarder**

The Liberal Party supported BREXIT in the referendum.

Liberals believe that in respect of the Northern Ireland/EU border question, a camera system should be installed, similar to the London Congestion Charge system together with implementing a trusted trader trader system administered by the DVLA. Such proposals are supported by up to 85% of the people in Northern Ireland, according to a recent survey.

With regard to the present arrangements, there is a physical border, and the police on both sides, along with technical border arrangements including VAT, Corporation Tax and personal tax, all work efficiently and amicably. This is part of the free travel area which has been in existence since 1922.

The major concern remains smuggling, which the proposed camera scheme would do much to ameliorate, and together with good will and close co-operation between law enforcement agencies should not present insurmountable difficulties in the absence of physical border checks.

**Sustainable Alternatives to fossil Fuels**

The Liberal Party welcomes the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report’ Global Warming of 1.5°C, which gives stark warnings about the impact we are having on the earth’s climate and the consequences for human and other life systems if we fail to take radical and immediate actions to cut risk of extreme heat, drought, floods and poverty.

With the IPCC report in focus, the Liberal Party calls upon government to implement an immediate ban on all expenditure which supports new fossil fuel initiatives, both at home or overseas. To report and publish all funding already committed to support fossil fuel initiatives both at home and overseas and to review if those projects are consistent with our climate commitments.

Further we call on government to establish an All Party Working Group, with assigned expert advisers from each potentially viable source, to define alternative non-fossil based energy strategies, solutions and funding requirements to meet 100% of UK energy needs by 2030.

In-line with our demand for non-fossil fuel energy solutions, we call for an immediate ban on all Shale Gas exploration and the full restoration of land already impacted by the industry.

We welcome the campaigns of Great Manchester City Council, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh assemblies to ban fracking.

**BREXIT Draft Article 132**

 Article 132 provides an instrument for the EU to extend the transition period for the UK departure from the EU to 20XX. Whilst the XX is not defined or limited, it could mean we are stuck in the EU until 2099 if negotiations are frustrated.

During the transition period we would not have a voice in the EU parliament, we would not have a right of veto, we would continue to contribute to the EU budget at a value that has not yet been defined and we would be unable to invoke trade deals.

Liberals believe that this article is against natural justice and would give an enormously powerful negotiation advantage to the EU. If Article 132 is not deleted the Liberal Party will oppose the governments current Brexit plan.

The people are fed up with divisive discussion and continued uncertainty and now call for Brexit to be brought to a close

**Hate Crime – Referred back for re-drafting**

**Motion by Dominic Allawy**